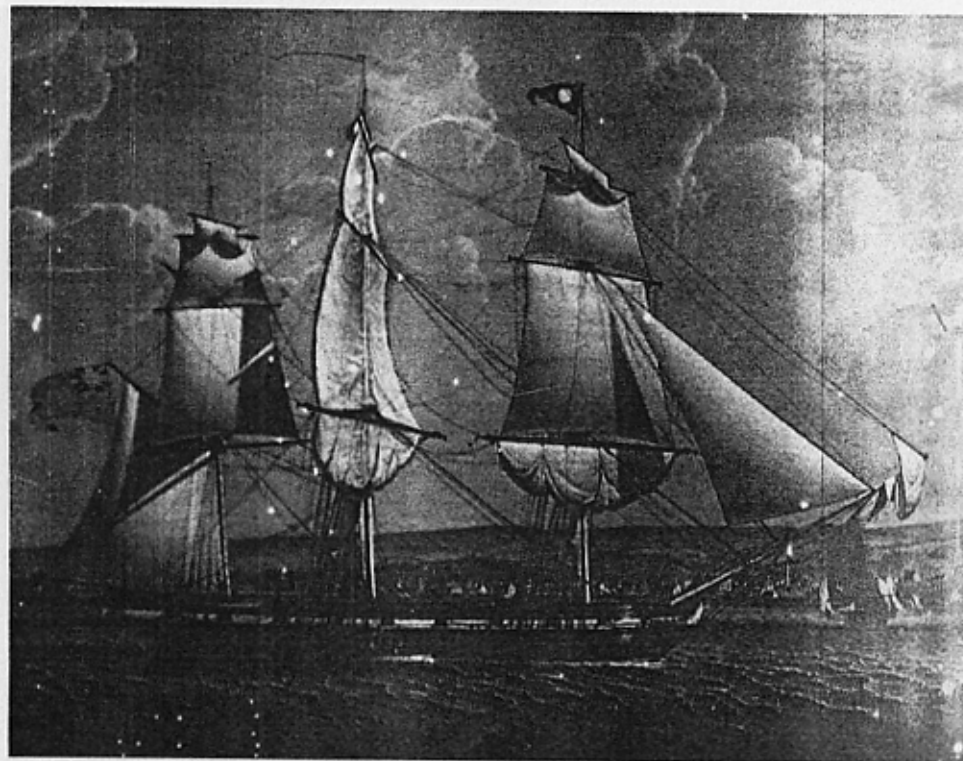


# AN INDIAN TAPESTRY

6<sup>th</sup> March 06.  
QUAKER THREADS  
IN THE HISTORY  
OF INDIA  
PAKISTAN &  
BANGLADESH



# MARJORIE SYKES

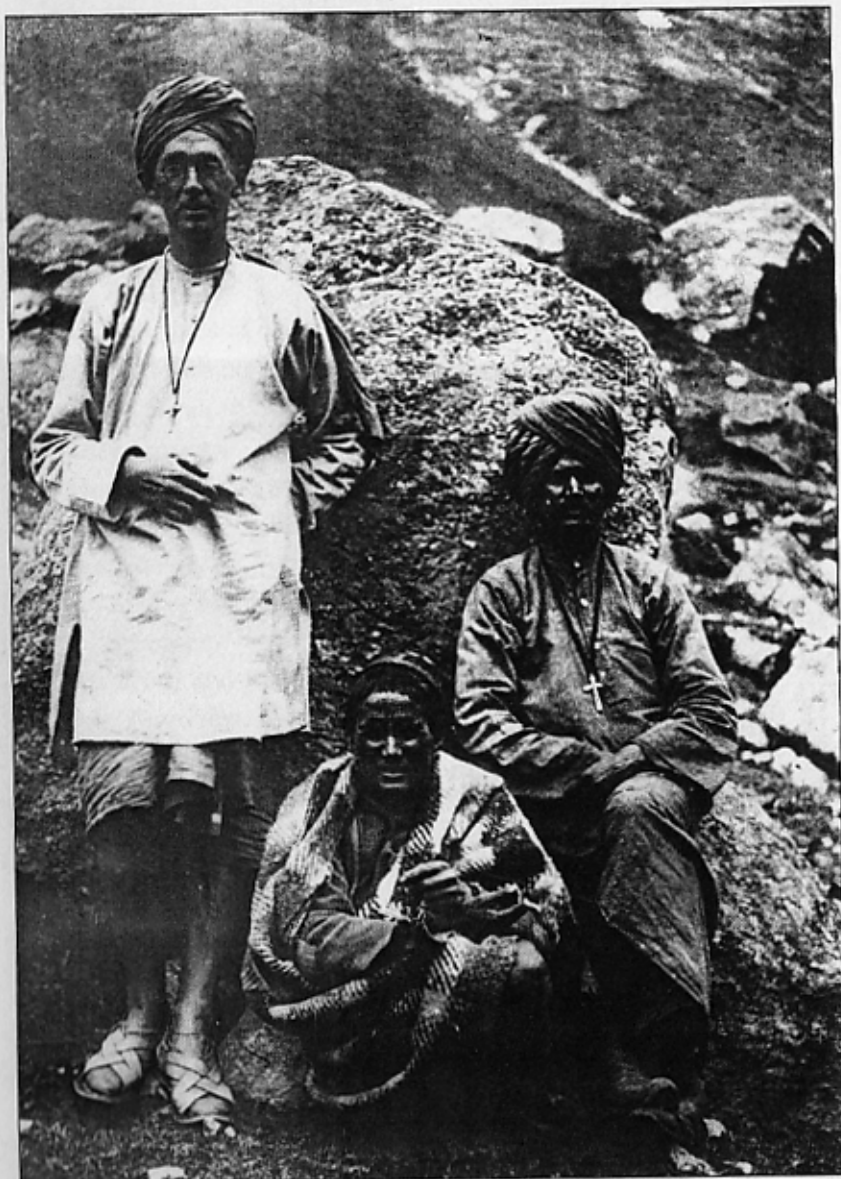
FROM THE  
SEVENTEENTH  
CENTURY TO  
INDEPENDENCE

## AN INDIAN TAPESTRY : QUAKER THREADS IN THE HISTORY OF INDIA, PAKISTAN & BANGLADESH

### THE WOODEN 'QUAKER' GUNS

*The front cover depicts the Three-Master Bengal, commissioned for the India trade in 1814 by Quaker-owners Cropper & Rathbone, complete with nine-aside, wooden 'Quaker Guns' pointing threateningly outwards. Painted at Greenock in 1815 by Robert Salmon.*

Courtesy of James A. Cropper



#### HIMALAYAN PILGRIMAGE

Two Quakers, left and right Geoffrey Maw and Khushilal,  
with their porter in the centre. Note the two crosses: see Chapter XIV

# An Indian Tapestry

QUAKER THREADS IN THE HISTORY  
OF INDIA, PAKISTAN & BANGLADESH

*From the Seventeenth Century to Independence*

by

Mayjorie Sykes

माजीरी सईक्स (Hindi)

மஜார்ஜி கன்கன் (Tamil)

Completed and Edited by

Geoffrey Carnall

Sessions Book Trust  
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## Foreword

by Martha Dart

A member of Claremont Friends Meeting, California, USA

Author of *Marjorie Sykes : Quaker Gandhian* (1993) and

Compiler and Editor of

*Transcending Tradition : Excerpts from the Writings and Talks  
of Marjorie Sykes* (1995)

ALL OF US who had any connection with Marjorie Sykes during the last years of her life (before her death at 90 in August 1995), were caught up in the excitement of her detective work as she pursued clues for her masterpiece, *An Indian Tapestry*. Her personal letters of these years reflect this: 'I don't believe in leaving a single stone unturned', wrote Marjorie. And she didn't! 'Fascinating new things keep turning up. I have discovered a young sensitive Quaker who died in a village near Dharwad (Karnatica) in 1825! Bits of his own "journal" have survived, and I hope to pursue other clues in the India Office Library. Yesterday two addresses were put into my hands of people I had given up all hope of finding' – and so on.

'One very pleasant engagement is with a woman who was born in Madras about the time I first reached there and who tells me she has some of her father's very early letters (first World War days). I am going over to spend the night in her home and read them. Contemporary letters are so precious.' Much of her work resembled a cross-word puzzle. 'The detective work is still turning up some curious little treasures, without any special effort on my part, and it is fun fitting them into where they belong.'

It is clear that Marjorie enjoyed her work and got a lot of fun out of it. 'A letter came from dear Ted Milligan [ex-librarian Friends House]. I had actually got ahead of him in discovering the English roots of some of my *dramatis personae*, so he couldn't resist trying to get ahead of me again and the result is wonderful!'

Absorbed though she was in her work during those years, other concerns harking back to her 60 years in India also demanded her attention. In July 1990, she wrote: 'I am temporarily diverted from my main job to something closely connected which I felt a strong "leading" should be done now. This is to edit Geoffrey Maw's incomplete but fascinating description of life on the Narmada river in the days when he lived in Hoshangabad. I discovered these papers in the Selly Oak Library and spent a good deal of my time at Woodbrooke studying and making notes, and by the end of term began to feel that they should be put into readable form and published as a little contribution to save the Narmada from the awful threat of 30 dams from source to mouth which would completely ruin the river, the forests, the people, the traditions, for the sake of very problematic benefit. There is strong and mounting opposition not only in India but world wide, I think there is hope.' This was published as *Narmadā: The Life of a River*.

Coinciding with the publication of this book a related concern demanded her attention. Fifty years earlier, she had been working with Tagore during the last years of his life, having been invited by him to be the 'Representative of English Culture' at Santiniketan. She had become fluent in Bengali and had translated many of his works into English. In 1992 Marjorie wrote to me: 'A sudden revived interest in my English translation of one of Tagore's plays, *Muktadhara* (made at his request but not completed during his lifetime), because in it the damming of a river is a symbol of arrogant interference with nature and other men's lives. This is related to strong feeling about the Narmada and also the Tehri dam in the region of the Himalayan earthquake last October. So I need to see what can be done about that.'

During this period also Marjorie was involved in translating the memoirs of Vinoba Bhave from a Hindi text prepared by Kalindi. She could often be found working on such translations as she travelled about England on the train! This translation was published in 1994 as *Moved by Love – The Memoirs of Vinoba Bhave*.

Marjorie was often in demand during these years to lecture on Tagore or Gandhi at gatherings throughout England. Her years of working with Gandhi during his lifetime and then as Principal of his Basic Education Program at Sevagram, later extending this programme to her own home in the Nilgiri Hills, made her one of the few people still alive who could share these experiences with the rest of us.

Through it all she continued to work steadily and quietly on *An Indian Tapestry*. In 1993, she wrote: 'This book has to grow naturally from chapter to chapter.' And again: 'I've had some amazing finds lately. They remind me of that saying by the great Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple:

"When I pray coincidences happen." I suppose I do use a kind of prayer.' She clearly did because that habit showed up in all of the other areas of her life as well.

Marjorie had a distinguished career but she will be remembered most of all for her gift of friendship and the transforming power of her spirit. This has been best expressed by Barbara Bowman, an English Quaker and a close friend for many years: 'I think of Marjorie as a woman of absolute integrity who lived in accordance with high principles, especially of truth and simplicity. Unencumbered by material possessions, she was able to live fully under the guidance of the Spirit and to respond with love and understanding to the needs of others.'

This book shows that alongside that living witness was much knowledge and wonderful delving into the history of Quakers in India of which she herself was such a significant part in this century. It is very good to have this last gift from her.

## Acknowledgements

APPRECIATION IS EXPRESSED to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for their generous assistance to the publishers, Sessions Book Trust, towards the financing of this book.

Lawrence Lidbetter kindly supplied the photograph of Thomas Lidbetter on p.52, Rachel Gilliatt the photograph of Jack Hoyland on p.161, and Richard Symonds the FAU group photograph on p.284. Other illustrations were brought to the publishers by Marjorie Sykes herself. Most are courtesy of Friends House Library, London, and others she obtained from equally appreciated personal sources. The publishers are grateful to all concerned.

The publishers are similarly grateful to Martha Dart of California for her Foreword; to Malcolm Thomas for the Literary Executors and to Chris Lawson of Woodbrooke for their encouragement and wise advice; and specially to Geoffrey Carnall for editing and completing this last great work of the indefatigable Marjorie Sykes.

## Editor's Note

THE PRESENT BOOK is a completely rewritten and considerably expanded version of Marjorie Sykes' *Quakers in India: a Forgotten Century*, published in 1980 by Allen and Unwin. It was Marjorie's intention to carry the story from the seventeenth century to the late 1980s, but the last chapter she actually wrote was the one on India during the Second World War. Her literary executors asked me to write a concluding chapter that would deal with events leading up to India's independence and its immediate aftermath. This I have done, making use of the excellent documentation Marjorie had gathered for the task. Her materials will be of great value to future inquirers into the activities of Quakers in India in the post-independence period, and will in due course be sorted and deposited in Friends' House Library in London.

Marjorie's handwriting is beautifully legible, and her manuscript presents few problems to the editor. The same cannot, alas, be said of all her notes and references, which are often clues for the diligent inquirer rather than a ready guide to her sources. Thus she quotes from Charles Darwin's *Autobiography* a passage only to be found in Nora Barlow's scholarly edition, published in 1958. A reader of the far more widely accessible edition in the Thinker's Library might well be puzzled, and Marjorie's own note simply mentions the years to which the passage refers, and not to any specific edition. I have done my best to clarify references in the manuscript in a way that will be useful to readers who want to follow up the lines of inquiry suggested by Marjorie's own research, and am grateful to Sylvia Carlyle, Josef Keith and Malcolm Thomas for helping me in this task. But I am conscious that perhaps more might have been done, and I hope readers will be forgiving.

It has certainly been an inspiring experience to follow in Marjorie's footsteps through books and periodicals, some long-forgotten until she disturbed the dust on their covers, and see how cheerfully she manages to answer that of God in every one.

Geoffrey Carnall

## CHAPTER I

### The Beginnings : 1657 to 1661

*'The lamps are different but the light is the same;  
it comes from Beyond.'*

JALAL UD-DIN RUMI

THE HISTORY OF QUAKER ENCOUNTERS with Southern Asia goes right back to the year 1657, when the Quaker movement itself was barely 10 years old. In order to understand how it began one must look both at England's connections with the Indian sub-continent, and at the nature of the Quaker movement itself.

During the turmoil of the Civil War and the years which followed, many people in all ranks of life 'felt instinctively that religion was running to dogma'<sup>1</sup> because of the sectarian disputes which then poisoned the life of English churches. These men and women found in public worship no spiritual nourishment; as the poet Milton wrote in compassionate indignation, 'the hungry sheep look up, and are not fed'. Many such 'hungry sheep' had begun to meet together in barns and farmhouses, to seek and pray for some real spiritual food.

It was from among these 'Seekers' that the first Quakers came. In 1647 a young man named George Fox began travelling among them, telling them that he had *found* what they were looking for. He had been, he said, in the blackest depth of despair; then a Voice had reached him: 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.' Christ had become for him a living, present Reality, an inward Teacher, a Light in the soul. The experience had transformed his life, he told them, and could transform theirs. Many listened, found the same experiences, and were drawn together in a joyful fearless fellowship. They called themselves Friends, remembering Jesus' words to his disciples: 'I have called you friends.' Their enemies in mockery called them 'Quakers' for they were physically shaken at times by the experience of the 'Light' in their lives.

Fox's message was not essentially new, though for him it was a revolutionary personal discovery. During his boyhood the saintly Benjamin Whichcote<sup>2</sup> was teaching that 'Christ should be inwardly felt as a principle of divine life within us.' The gentle, retiring Whichcote however was little known. But in 1642-3, when Fox as a youth of 18 was wrestling with doubt and despair, came a famous, widely-read book. This was *Religio Medici*, by Thomas Prowne, who was then a young man of 30. 'I am sure,' wrote Browne, 'that there is a common spirit that plays within us, and that is the Spirit of God. Whoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of that Spirit, I dare not say he lives; for truly without it there is no heat under the tropics, nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the sun.'

A few years later George Fox was saying very much the same thing: 'The Lord opened to me by his invisible power how that everyone was enlightened by the divine light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all.' *Everyone*, said Fox, and he meant it. The light was for all humanity – for the slaves of the West Indies equally with their masters, for the 'heathen, Turk and Jew' of eastern lands equally with the Christians of Europe. Men and women, of every class, race and creed, might partake of the one light and be guided by the one light 'that shines beyond darkness in the hearts of all.'

That last phrase comes not from Christian insight, but from the ancient scriptures of India, a country in which English people were taking an increasing interest. In 1583 some English adventurers had travelled to Aleppo by the famous ship *The Tyger*,<sup>3</sup> and then by the river Euphrates, the Persian Gulf, and the great port of Hormuz, to India – a direct if hazardous route. One of them settled among the Portuguese in Goa, another at the court of the Mogul Emperor Akbar; a third, Ralph Fitch, travelled from the imperial city of Agra by the Jumna and Ganges to Patna, and saw the brisk traffic in merchandise along the great rivers. When he reached home again in 1591 he recounted his experiences. Might not English merchants enter that profitable trade?

By the end of the century that question had acquired practical urgency. Pepper and condiments from the 'spice islands' of the East Indies were an attractive addition to the bland, monotonous English diet. This trade was in the hands of the Dutch, and in 1599 they almost tripled their prices. In answer to this challenge, and in consultation with Ralph Fitch, the English launched 'the worshipful company of London merchants trading to the East Indies'. The merchants soon discovered that the inhabitants of the spice islands had no use for English *woollens* (!) but that they would gladly exchange their peppers for muslins and calicoes from India. The East India Company therefore sought and obtained the consent of Akbar's successor, the Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan, for trading stations in India.<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch naturally did not welcome competitors in the spice islands, and they were the stronger party. In 1624 – the year of Fox's birth – they drove the English out by the ruthless 'massacre of Amboyna'. The English were very angry but could get no redress. The East India Company, finding that pepper could be had in India itself, concentrated on India, where the Emperor Shah Jehan gave the merchants protection, and invited England to send an ambassador to his court. Under his rule, and that of the Sultan of Bijapur in the peninsula, India was prosperous and at peace, and during the next decades Indian spices, Indian textiles, even occasionally a well-built Indian ship, found their way to the Port of London.<sup>5</sup>

In 1654 the expanding Quaker movement came into contact with the Indian trade. Up to then the Friends had drawn their largest numbers of recruits from the farming communities and little market towns of the north of England, but in that year they carried their message to the key cities of the south. 'Ploughmen from the north' arrived in the two great sea-ports, London and Bristol, where they soon had a strong foothold. In Bristol thousands joined them, from every walk of life and all ranks of society.

In the same year Cromwell's war with the Dutch ended in victory, and in some redress for the outrages at Amboyna 30 years earlier. Cromwell also reached an agreement with the Portuguese, by which the Anglo-Portuguese trade-war in Indian waters was brought to an end. These events were of special interest in Bristol, for Bristol men had long been involved in Indian affairs. A Bristol sea-farer, Martin Pring, had been a close friend of Sir Thomas Roe, the first ambassador to the Mogul court; Pring himself had helped to establish the first trading stations, at Surat on the west coast of India and Masulipatam on the east. Another Bristol sea-captain, Giles Penn, was familiar with the 'Moorish' (Arab) trade routes to India; his son William Penn, Admiral of the Fleet, was a national hero of the Dutch war.

During that war English merchant shipping had been armed against its Dutch rivals. Some of these 'privateers' were Bristol ships, and a number of them were owned, or part-owned, by families who in 1654-5 became Friends. Most of these Bristol merchants traded westward across the Atlantic, but one of the ships proclaimed her destination in her very name: *The Bengal Merchant*. She was Quaker-owned; the names of her owners, Abraham Lloyd and others, appear in contemporary Quaker records. She may not have been the only Bristol ship to travel east, for there were always plenty of 'interlopers' in the East India Company's profitable trade. In general its Directors regarded them with disfavour, but *The Bengal Merchant* was clearly in good standing; she is listed as carrying cargo for the Company to Balasore in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>6</sup>

From the great English ports Friends at once began to carry their message overseas. In 1655 men and women began to travel to Rhode Island and Barbados, and to the continent of Europe, in obedience to 'the call of the Lord'. Practical questions soon arose. Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough, who had led the 1654 'ploughmen' to the port cities, realised that Friends in London were carrying an unfairly large share of the financial burden of the enterprise. In consultation with Margaret Fell (later to become George Fox's second wife), who maintained a kind of Quaker headquarters at her home in Cumbria, they and others sent out an appeal to every Quaker group, large or small, throughout the country, asking for funds towards the cost of overseas service.

The appeal met with a good response, and in 1657 it was followed by a general meeting of Friends, whose central theme was that 'the everlasting Gospel must be preached to all nations'. There was great enthusiasm; for three days the Bedfordshire country house where the meeting took place, and every village inn around, were filled to over-flowing, and many Friends offered themselves for service. Some were 'moved of the Lord' to go to the 'East Indies', but passages proved 'hard to get and dear', and so far as is known only one Friend reached his goal. He returned in the summer of 1661 and reported to George Fox in London; Fox in his turn included him in the newsletter which he circulated among Friends in August: 'Here is a Friend who hath been three years out in the East Indies, who hath done much servis, and brings a good report of many that received his testimony.'

Fox tells us no more, not even the traveller's name, but it is tempting to speculate a little. Was it *The Bengal Merchant*, equipped (as she was) to carry 'landsmen' as well sailors, which provided the passage – or some other Quaker-owned ship? The question is probably unanswerable.

More may be said, however, about the 'many' who 'received his testimony' and gave the traveller a friendly hearing. The ancient Indian vision, quoted earlier, of the light that 'shines beyond darkness in the hearts of all', had lived on in the poetry and song of every regional language. Just as Quaker experience echoed that of Benjamin Whichcote and Thomas Browne in England, so in south India it echoed that of the Tamil saint Appar, who travelled from village to village humbly cleaning the little shrines, and singing of 'the Teacher who enters the heart' and 'the jewelled lamp that shines in the soul'. Appar's fellow-countrymen, if they met that Quaker traveller, might well have recognised that though his 'lamp' was different, its light was the same.

Such poet-devotees were to be found in every part of India, and like the Quakers they were drawn from every social class and from both sexes.

Like the Quakers they proclaimed that earthly rank means nothing before God:

It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be.  
The banker has sought God, the washerman and the carpenter.<sup>7</sup>  
Hindu and Muslim alike have reached that goal  
Where remains no mark of distinction.

The author of those lines was a Muslim weaver named Kabir, who lived in the 14th century, and who was familiar also with that inward battle which Friends sometimes called 'the Lamb's war'.

Behold, the battle is joined, the the attack is fierce.  
Anger, passion and pride, ambition, lust and desire  
Are the foes who charge against us.  
The warrior's sword is the Holy Name. In this war  
No place is there for cowards.<sup>8</sup>

There were others, like the Baul singers of Bengal, who spoke as bluntly as George Fox did about the way in which the external trappings of religion may block the path to the reality:

Thy path, O Lord, is hidden by mosque and temple.  
Thy Voice I hear – but priest and *guru* bar the way!

Some of these poets were contemporaries of George Fox himself. One such was Tuka Ram, a village grain-seller in western India, whose imagery is that of daily village life:

A humble earthenware pot is given honour;  
It is set on the head, and carried high,  
Because of the life-giving water within.  
Show reverence to humanity; God dwells within humanity.<sup>9</sup>

Another of Fox's contemporaries was a Muslim *pir* (saint) who founded a brotherhood called the *Sauds*.<sup>10</sup> Its members lived very simply, earned their bread by their own labour, and served the needy Hindu and Muslim alike. They also, like their Quaker contemporaries, refused to take an oath.

Many of the poet-devotees were known only within the regions whose language they spoke. But every region also possessed its own version of the great epic stories which were and are familiar all over India, retold by poets in every local language. One of these is the *Ramayana*, which celebrates the divine-human hero Rama. At the climax of this story the unarmed Rama is told that the demon-king Ravan is approaching in his war-chariot to give battle. Rama replies:

The chariot of victory is of another kind. Courage and fortitude are its wheels, truthfulness and upright conduct its banner and its

standard. The horses are self-control and goodwill, harnessed with cords of forgiveness and compassion.

There, in Indian imagery, is 'the whole armour of God', and what George Fox called 'the patience which gets the victory'.

The image of the war-chariot appears again in the epic *Mahabharata*, in the famous section called *Bhagavad Gita* (the song of the Lord) in which the divine-human Krishna acts as charioteer to the hero Arjuna, and strengthens him for the coming battle. The ideal which Krishna sets before Arjuna has lived on through the centuries: *nishkama Karma*, 'action without desire'. In other words, do what you see to be your duty, do not trouble whether you 'succeed' or 'fail'. As Admiral William Penn was to say to his Quaker son and namesake, 'never wrong your conscience'.

It was from insights such as these that many of those with whom Friends have worked in India derived their spiritual strength. The same insights may have enabled their ancestors to 'receive the testimony' of the nameless Friend who was 'moved of the Lord' to visit India during the years between 1657 and 1661.

## Notes to Chapter I

*Books mentioned were published in London unless otherwise indicated.*

*[Comments by the editor are enclosed within square brackets].*

1 This phrase is used by Ronald Knox in his book *Enthusiasm*, Oxford 1950, p.145.

2 Benjamin Whichcote (1609-83) was Provost of King's College Cambridge. A distinguished preacher, he also cared for the poor, taught their children to read, and acted as peacemaker in quarrels.

3 Shakespeare's original audience would have had no difficulty with the reference in *Macbeth*: 'Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tyger' (I iii 7).

4 Historical details are derived from *The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by G.T.Garratt and E.J.Thompson, 1934, who quote original sources.

5 Some of Fox's Puritan contemporaries strongly disapproved of this luxury trade, designed in their opinion to 'show the pride of our hearts in decking our proud carcasses, and feeding our greedy guts with superfluous unnecessary curiosities' (*Tyrannipocrit Discovered*, 1649, in Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 1972, p.272.)

6 Details of ships and ship-owners are given in J.W.Damer Powell, *Bristol Privateers and Ships of War*, Bristol 1930. For the listing of *The Bengal Merchant* in East India Company records I am indebted to Professor K.N.Choudhury, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

7 The occupations named all ranked low in the traditional social hierarchy.

8 The first of these translations is by Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet of the twentieth century, in *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, 1914; The second by Tagore's friend Mahatma Gandhi, in *Songs from Prison*, New York 1934.

9 See John S.Hoyland, *Village Songs of Western India*, 1934, p.69. [The Hoyland translation differs from that quoted in the text.]

10 The name Saud is derived from an Arabic root denoting bliss: 'the blessed company'. The first Sauds were Meos, tribal people who had become Muslim under the influence of the great *pir* Khwajah Mu'in al din Chisti of Ajmer. For an account of their history, see S.Khuda Baksh, *Essays Indian and Islamic*, 1912 Professor Vahiduddin of Tughlaqabad, Delhi, kindly summarised for me the information on the Sauds in an Urdu *History of the Meos* by Abdus Shukoor.

## CHAPTER II

## A Servant of 'John Company' : 1749 to 1751

*'Some there are who have left a name behind them . . . There are some who are unremembered.'*

THE WISDOM OF JOSHUA BEN SIRA  
(ECCLESIASTICUS) CH. 44

AFTER 1661 there is no record of any further Quaker contact with India for nearly 90 years. During those years the situation had greatly changed, both in India and in the Society of Friends.

The Emperor Akbar, contemporary with Queen Elizabeth I in England, had governed India as a 'secular state', and chosen his civil and military officers on merit, from Muslim and Hindu Rajput families alike. His successor Shah Jehan maintained this principle. Aurangzeb, whose reign began in 1659, was of a different stamp. He carved his way to power by destroying the Bijapur sultanate and murdering his own elder brother Dara Shikoh. His religious bigotry soon alienated the Rajputs on the one hand and the Marathas of western India on the other. There were rebellions, and when his long reign ended in 1707 his empire was falling apart. Regional governors became independent princes; Persians and Afghans in turn made themselves masters of Delhi; Maratha armies spread terror.

In the general insecurity the East India Company could no longer 'avoid garrisons and warfare', as Sir Thomas Roe had wisely advised in happier days. They garrisoned first Fort St George (Madras), then Bombay,<sup>1</sup> and then in 1690 Fort William (Calcutta) and Fort St David (Cuddalore). Bombay began to grow rapidly, for western India was so chaotic that many Indian families sought refuge there.

The English traders were threatened also by their traditional rivals the French, who had trading stations at Pondicherry in the south, on the Hugli river near Calcutta and on the west coast near Surat. In 1746 a French force captured and destroyed Fort St George. The news of the disaster shook the Directors, who had regarded their business as 'trade, not war'. They realised that all their stations were weakly defended, and when peace was signed in 1748 and the ruined Fort handed back to the Company, they sought for and appointed an engineer to plan and carry out the work needed for the greater security of all their stations. The engineer chosen was a Friend.

Friends had suffered much in England after 1661. When the monarchy was restored steps were taken to guard against sedition, one of which required 'conformity' to the established church. An older law had empowered magistrates to administer an oath of loyalty to anyone whose conduct aroused suspicion, and they used their power against Friends. Friends declared that they would gladly obey 'all just and good laws', but that they would neither take an oath nor give up their meetings for worship, which they held openly and publicly. As a result thousands were heavily fined and thousands more imprisoned in the filthy insanitary jails. Many died there, many more were broken in health. Persecution continued intermittently for the next 25 years, and drove large numbers of Friends to seek in the American colonies the freedom denied to them at home.

At last in 1689 the Toleration Act brought relief, but by then the leaders of the first Quaker generation had almost all died exhausted, and Fox himself followed them in 1691. A younger generation carried the work forward, and their message brought conviction to many hearts. But the first ardour had cooled, and Friends tended to share the general distaste for the fervours and fanaticisms amidst which the Society had been born; any religious ardour, any 'enthusiasm', was commonly regarded as undesirable, even dangerous. For second and third generation Friends, religion no longer meant an adventurous openness to new light, it meant loyalty to tradition. This loyalty moreover was expressed in 'rules and forms to walk by' of a kind which the first Quakers had rejected,<sup>2</sup> and against which Margaret Fell Fox, in old age, raised her voice in vain. Why, she demanded, should beauty of colour and music be rejected? – That was 'a poor silly Gospel' indeed! The 'rules and forms' repelled many who might otherwise have joined Friends.

The tradition itself was by no means all negative, and it fostered a healthy independence of judgment. From the beginning, following the example of Fox himself, Friends encouraged 'all useful knowledge' and steadily ignored the law which forbade them to establish schools. Their schools survived, in spite of periods of persecution, and the best of them



enabled gifted children to develop their intellectual curiosity. The Royal Society, whose pioneers were George Fox's contemporaries, had a number of Quaker Fellows. William Penn himself was one of them; as he explained to his fellow-members, Friends disliked accepting things 'on authority, without having a finger in the pie themselves'! Another Fellow in the next generation, was the cultured and learned London apothecary Silvanus Bevan, whose wife was the daughter of Daniel Quare, Quaker clock-maker to the royal court. Bevan himself was well known in courtly circles, and he took an interest in gifted children; he had helped a poor intelligent country boy, William Cookworthy, to get a start in life.

The East India Company's future engineer was another such poor intelligent country boy. His name was Benjamin Robins (his surname, like others, was spelt variously – Robbins, Robeins – even in the same document) and he was the only son of a poor tailor in the neighbourhood of Bath. Local Quaker records for the period are so fragmentary that only circumstantial evidence is available for his early years.

It is clear however that Benjamin's father John Robins, poor as he was, was a respected Friend, for he was appointed regularly to the monthly and quarterly business meetings in the Somerset area. In 1699-1700 this Quarterly Meeting decided it must have a school, and arranged with a Quaker teacher, William Jenkins, to start one at Sidcot.<sup>3</sup> It was to be his private school, but the Somerset Friends guaranteed any support it needed during the first two years, and Jenkins kept a few free places for poor Quaker boys who could not pay the regular fee. He was an able teacher, the school flourished, and Jenkins became a regular attender at Monthly Meetings, where he met John Robins. It seems virtually certain that little Benjamin, born in 1706-7, would become one of his free pupils, and that as the boy grew Jenkins recognised the quality of his mind.

One of the members of the Quarterly Meeting was a Thomas 'Beaven' who regularly attended Yearly Meeting in London. Did Jenkins, in 1721 or 1722, send a letter by his hands to Silvanus Bevan, telling him about his promising pupil, and asking whether Silvanus could find pupils for Robins among his aristocratic acquaintances, so that the boy could support himself while he carried on his own studies? Something of the sort must have happened, for Silvanus received some specimens of Robins' mathematical work and showed them to a doctor friend of his, Henry Pemberton.<sup>4</sup>

From that point onwards circumstantial evidence gives place to Pemberton's own account. He had mathematical interests, and was both shrewd and generous in helping able young people. He was impressed by Robins' work and sent him a few more mathematical conundrums; Robins' solutions satisfied him, and he invited the boy to London.

In Pemberton's household Benjamin Robins found congenial companions with whom he quickly made friends. Thanks to Bevan and Pemberton he soon had pupils. He must have been a gifted teacher; his own surviving manuscripts with their strong clear handwriting and their vividly simple style suggest as much.<sup>5</sup> He taught his pupils individually, and always referred them to the primary authorities which he himself was studying, Euclid and Apollonius. It was Pemberton who suggested Apollonius, of whose work good English translations were then becoming available.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile Pemberton himself, who was a friend of Isaac Newton, was helping Newton to prepare the third edition of his *Principia*, which was published in 1726. His enthusiasm influenced Robins, who admired Newton greatly, and took Newton's part vigorously in the scientific disputes of the time. Young as he was, his contributions earned him serious notice, and in November 1727, on Silvanus Bevan's nomination, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society. He was barely 21 years old.

Robins' success did not turn his head; he remained a merry, high-spirited young man 'with no ostentation and no pedantry'. By that time he had ceased to wear the 'Quaker garb' in which he had first reached London, and about which his new London friends had surely teased him a great deal. He had also with Pemberton's encouragement learned to enjoy music and literature, things which (not being considered 'useful knowledge') had formed no part of his Quaker schooling. In essentials however he kept his Quaker links intact,<sup>7</sup> and remained on affectionate terms with his father, who as he grew older was sometimes in real need.<sup>8</sup> As soon as Benjamin could afford it he purchased an annuity which freed John Robins from financial anxiety for the rest of his life.

That Benjamin Robins was in fact generally known to be a Friend is shown by a piece of scientific invective (rivalling in vigour the sectarian invective of the previous century) which was sent to the Royal Society in 1736. The writer announced his intention to publish 'a short treatise (occasioned by Benjamin Robins' late hypocritical, ungeometrical, pseudo-grammatical discourse) to be entitled *ROBINS DISROBED*, wherein the outer darkness of *Friend Benjamin Robins' Notions* is discovered and made manifest by the *Inward Light* of Truth, Reason and Geometry, by a true and faithful servant of Geometry'. There is no evidence that this 'servant of Geometry' (that God of the age) ever published his treatise, but his satirical use of Quaker phrases, underlined in the original, is unmistakable.<sup>9</sup>

Robins developed a keen interest in problems of velocity; he also had a strong practical bent and tested his theories by experimental investigation. The effect of the resistance of the air on the velocity of projectiles

had clear practical applications in the science of gunnery, and led him into that field of study. His book, *New Principles of Gunnery*, published in 1742, quickly became the standard text book all over Europe and remained so for more than 60 years. Meanwhile Robins himself had turned his attention to problems of civil engineering such as building bridges, draining swamps and constructing harbours; he was one of the Fellows of the Royal Society whose advice was sought by the City of London for a new bridge over the Thames. It is not surprising therefore that the East India Company's Directors should have decided that he was the man they needed. In 1749 they invited him to become their Engineer-General on a four-year contract.

Robins' acceptance was by no means a foregone conclusion. He had been deeply interested in the voyage round the world undertaken by George Anson in 1744, and it was said that Anson's *Journal* of the voyage, published in 1748, owed much to Robins' skilful editing. That may have been so. The book was a 'best-seller', and Robins certainly helped to prepare the second edition which was immediately called for; he was in correspondence with Anson about other work. However, he decided on the Indian adventure, and in December 1749 was picked up off Walmer Castle (Deal) by the Company's ship *Grantham* and given a salute of 13 guns.

'Unlucky 13'? There were many troubles ahead. The ship came 'near to being cast away' in a stubbornly persistent attempt to help another Company ship, *The Duke of Cumberland*, wrecked near Cape Verde. Robins' first service to the Directors was to send them a description of the exact position in which the wreck lay, so that possible salvage operations might be easier. When *The Grantham* at last dropped anchor off Fort St David in July 1750 it had been seven months at sea (not unusual in those days). After the destruction of Fort St George, Fort St David had become headquarters.

Robins reported to the Governor and plunged at once into his work. Fort St David was the least of his problems, and he soon moved on to the ruined Fort St George. No wonder it had fallen so easily, he thought as he read the report submitted by a previous engineer in 1743: 'The wall is no fortification at all, and would fall down if the houses built against it did not hold it up . . . the river is continually forded at less than two feet deep.

By the end of September Robins had prepared and despatched his proposals for both Forts, and his recommendation that Fort St George, when rebuilt, should once more become and remain the seat of the Governor. His actual plans for Madras cannot now be traced, but he probably included in the protected area, along with the Fort, the adjacent Indian villages now called Georgetown, and proposed the diversion of the sluggish river.

'We approve of the amendments and alterations you are making at Fort St David,' replied the Directors, 'the more so as the expense appears very moderate.' (!) They also approved of the restoration of Fort St George, which, wrote Robins, he would 'compleat without waiting for further orders'. He could not however begin the task at once. He had worked hard in the humid heat of the worst season of the year, and suffered a bout of fever – possibly the exhausting dengue fever so common on the coast.

When he recovered there were other matters to attend to. The Directors had appointed six young assistants, and instructed him with their help to compile reliable information, which would be useful for their trade, about local geography and commerce, and navigation in local waters. He planned to make an accurate survey of the countryside and the coastline, and became very fond of the 'young people' who worked with him. The work was not as straightforward as it sounds, for in spite of the official 'peace', roving bands of French soldiers could hinder progress.

In March 1751 Robins travelled by sea to Fort William, Calcutta, spent 10 or 12 days there and returned to Cuddalore by the same ship. He recognised at once the importance of Calcutta, and urged the Directors to pay special attention to the security of Fort William. The mud flats of Bengal however were even more unhealthy than the pestilent Madras river; whether or not Robins contracted some infection there is not known, but by May, back in Cuddalore, he 'fell into a languishing condition'. He continued to work doggedly on for another two months, but by the time the Directors had received and expressed approval of his preliminary report on Calcutta, their Engineer-General had gone prematurely to his grave.

Robins died on July 29th, 'with his pen in his hand'. James Brohier, the ablest of his assistants, had been with him to the end, and it was he who went to the Governor, then sitting in Council, to tell him the news. Robins had realised a few days earlier that he was dying, and had written a last message to the Directors: 'Gentlemen, I must aver to you that I have served you with the most Disinterested Zeal. I am now upon my Death Bed, but cannot help giving you these few lines in relation to your affairs.' He went on to say that he had been working on a full report about Calcutta, 'but because of many Accidents and my Sicknesse it is of no use, being intelligible only to myself.' He recommended James Brohier as his successor in Madras: 'He is certainly the properest person for the work, and has behaved hitherto with great integrity.'

Robins wrote also to the Governor, repeating his recommendation of Brohier, and putting forward the name of another of his 'young people', John Call, as one who would be 'very usefull' as Brohier's assistant.<sup>10</sup> He mentioned 'extraordinary expenses' in connection with the visit to Calcutta, 'but as to the Justness of Accounts, my Head will at present but

little answer for it'. He directed that his 'faithful servant George Reynolds' should have a small legacy, that Brohier and Call should share his books on engineering, and that Brohier should have 'his choice of my Swords'. Finally came a Quakerly request that 'my Burial may be the plainest, simplest and least expensive possible'.

Brohier delivered the letter to the Governor, who read it, and ordered that the burial 'be suitable to the Status he has borne, and be done at the Company's expense'. Probably therefore it may not have been as plain and simple as Robins desired. No stone was ever erected – when the time came for that, war with France had broken out again. Yet, as a later historian wrote, 'no more shining example of single-hearted devotion to duty in the face of exhausting illness can be found in the whole range of Anglo-Indian history'.<sup>11</sup>

Robins in India in his mid 40s was the same cheery, unpretentious person he had been as a young man; he enjoyed his 'young people', he enjoyed the society of his fellow-officers. The Governor's despatch to the Directors spoke of their sense of 'inexpressible loss', and specially mentioned Robins' 'agreeable conduct in private life'. Even those two business letters of a dying man are shot through with gleams of a delightful humour, which must surely have raised many a good laugh during the earlier months.

Benjamin Robins was the first of many Friends who came to India not to 'publish Truth' but to do some useful professional job. Fox himself had urged all such Friends, no matter what their calling, to 'let their lives preach', and there seems no doubt that Robins' life 'preached' of sterling honesty, cheerful courage and warm human friendliness, as well as of what he himself called 'disinterested zeal' in the performance of his duty.

Modern Friends might query those 'Swords' which he possessed and bequeathed; but once Robins had discarded the 'peculiar' Quaker dress it was natural that he should conform to the practice of his time, when a sword was a regular part of a gentleman's outfit. More seriously, the modern Friend would question Robins' contributions to gunnery and semi-military engineering. But as a modern Quaker scientist has pointed out, Robins stood at a turning point in the history of science.<sup>12</sup> It was a time when society was in a state of euphoria over the achievements of scientific discovery.

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night  
God said *Let Newton be!* and all was light.

Alexander Pope, the author of that well-known couplet, had also put into words the conclusion to which this euphoria led:

All partial evil, universal good;  
All discord, harmony not understood.

For Robins' contemporaries, *any* growth in human understanding of how the world works, even of the 'partial evil' of the science of gunnery, *must* in the end be conducive to good. If Robins failed to see another side of the matter he was by no means the only Quaker scientist to share the limitations of his own time.

Perhaps the best word to use of Benjamin Robins is his own term of praise: integrity. It is fitting that he should not go 'unremembered'.

## Notes to Chapter II

General sources: Records in the India Office Library, London, and Quaker documents in the County Record Office, Trowbridge, Wilts.

- 1 Bombay came into British hands as a royal wedding present in 1660.
- 2 Cf. the famous minute of the Elders at Balby, 1660: 'These things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by.'
- 3 The comment has been made that the confused language of the minute shows how greatly a school was needed.
- 4 Pemberton studied medicine at Leyden; he may have been debarred as a 'dissenter' from study at an English university. It is possible that he was a kinsman of Silvanus Bevan; James Wilson's memoir of Pemberton states that while attending St Thomas's Hospital he lodged 'with a relation, an apothecary'. See Henry Pemberton, *A Course of Chemistry*, 1771, p.x.
- 5 Manuscripts in the library of the Royal Society.
- 6 W. Johnson, 'Benjamin Robins, F.R.S. (1707-1751). New Details of his Life', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, vol.46 no.2, July 1992, pp.235-252.
- 7 *The Dictionary of National Biography* states that Robins 'ceased to be a Quaker' soon after settling in London. The statement appears to be based on James Wilson's *Memoir* prefaced to Robins' *Mathematical Tracts*, 1761, vol.1 pp.vii-viii. Wilson's statement is not borne out by other evidence.
- 8 He received financial assistance from the Monthly Meeting on at least three occasions recorded in the minutes.
- 9 Quoted by permission of the Royal Society from their archives Roy.Soc.Cl. P.xvii 70.

10 His employers took his advice. In 1770 John Call retired honourably to England after thirteen years as Chief Engineer in succession to Brohier.

11 H. Davison Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, 1913, vol 2 p.414 (India Office, Indian Records Series).

12 O.T. Benfey, 'The Scientist's Conscience', in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1956, p.178.

### CHAPTER III

## Slavery, Sugar and Shipping : 1752 to 1838

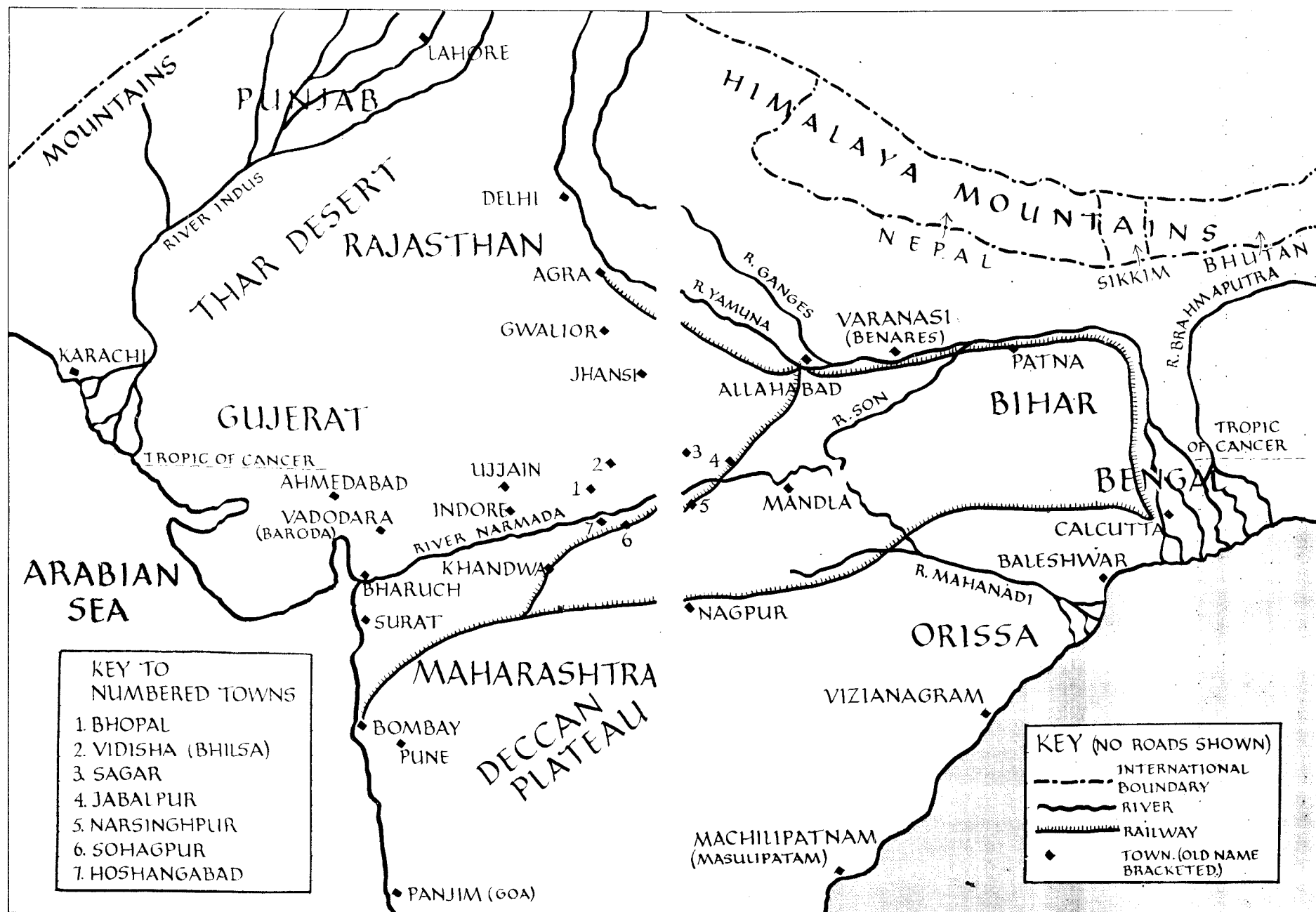
*'The principles of true politics are those of morality enlarged.'*

EDMUND BURKE

BENJAMIN ROBINS was hardly in his grave before hostilities between the English traders and their French rivals broke out again. The struggles of the next few years were decisive, and their hero was Robert Clive, whom Benjamin Robins must have known. Clive had entered Company service in 1743 as a reckless, headstrong youth of 18; he was in Madras when the Fort was captured in 1746. He escaped by night in disguise, and reached Fort St David at Cuddalore safely. There he soon rose to notice for his military genius; his natural recklessness was turned to good account in the brilliant and daring strategies which marked the victorious South Indian campaign of 1751-52. After that there was a wedding in the old Fort Church in Madras, and Clive took his bride to England. He returned to conduct a second campaign in Bengal, where in 1757 the battle of Plassey set Britain on the road to future empire in India. In 1765 the Mogul Emperor formally recognised the position, and delegated governmental powers to the Company in the territories it controlled.

By then Clive was no longer in India. In 1760 he had returned to England, still a young man but a fabulously wealthy one. This was the seamy side of his career; he was the first of the so-called 'Nabobs' who grew rich during those years of unscrupulous extortion. The very word Nabob is a corrupt form of the Indian title Nawab (Ruler); their methods were equally corrupt. 'The people under their dominions,' wrote an Indian observer, 'groan everywhere, and are reduced to poverty and distress.'

In 1764 a young civilian named Warren Hastings, who had spent 14 years in rural Bengal and seen with his own eyes the change which had



Northern and Central India c. 1875 to illustrate Chapters I-VI,

taken place, went to the Directors to protest about the shameful conduct of the Company's 'servants'. The following year, in exercise of its new governmental powers, the Company appointed a Resident in the textile town of Murshidabad. 'This fine country,' he reported in 1769, 'which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary Government, is verging towards its ruin.'<sup>2</sup> He was right in his assessment. In spite of political confusion India was prosperous, with a great tradition of skilled craftsmanship of many kinds. He was also right about the imminent 'ruin'; disaster struck the following year, in the terrible Bengal famine of 1770.

The Directors were shocked; they admitted that 'vast fortunes have been made by the most tyrannous and oppressive conduct ever known'; they sent Warren Hastings back to Bengal as Governor-General to do what he could to put things right. He struggled on till 1785, but could do little, for he was thwarted at every turn by the corruptions of the government system itself. Even while he struggled, some of the 'vast fortunes' extorted from Bengal were being used to finance the inventions of the English Industrial Revolution, whose impact on India, during the early decades of the next century, was to be no less disastrous than the 1770 famine.

Why did Friends in England not speak out about the 'tyrannous and oppressive conduct' of their fellow-countrymen in India, as Friends of a century earlier had denounced the 'covetous cruel oppressors' of that time? 'True godliness,' said William Penn, ought to 'excite endeavours to mend' the faults of society. But in 1770 many Friends took an opposite view; the Society of Friends, they said, was *not* 'the proper instrument for setting right things which may appear out of order'; Friends should be very cautious how they 'intermeddle in politics or government'.<sup>3</sup> It was inadvisable, they were warned, to take part in 'the petitions and protests carrying on in various places for different purposes'.<sup>4</sup>

Such warnings however themselves show that there were other views, England was being stirred by Methodist 'enthusiasts' who proclaimed a religion of inward experience, as George Fox had done before them. When fear of 'enthusiasm' closed the churches against them they preached in the open air and like George Fox attracted men and women of every social class. And they did not hesitate to denounce 'covetous cruel oppressors', among them those who traded in African slaves.

In Liverpool about 1755 the Methodist leader George Whitefield met the captain of a slave ship. He was a young man named John Newton who from boyhood had led a wild and reckless life at sea. The meeting changed his course; after long patient study he became in his turn a popular preacher. He also recorded his own experience in the slave trade in a book called *Authentic Narrative*, which was published in 1764 and was widely

read. Not long afterwards a little boy named William Wilberforce sat listening enthralled to his stories in the home of a friend.

The horrors of the slave trade were also beginning to disturb the minds of British Friends, who were urged to take action by their fellow-Quakers in the United States, where slavery was so glaringly visible. John Woolman himself visited England, and exposed the fact that even some Quaker ship-owners were involved in the traffic. The climate of opinion changed rapidly; the warnings of 1770 about 'intermeddling in politics' were cast aside, and in 1783 an opportunity for united public action arrived. A Bill came before Parliament for the 'regulation' of African trade. Every man present at the Quaker Yearly Meeting<sup>5</sup> signed a petition to Parliament, asking that 'all persons whomsoever' should be forbidden to export slaves from Africa.

Two years later William Wilberforce, now a young M.P., consulted his old friend John Newton about whether it was right for him, as a Christian, to continue his political career. 'Do not leave politics,' said Newton. 'Serve Christ in politics.' Wilberforce obeyed; from then on he served Christ in the cause of the slaves. Outside Parliament he was supported by a strong group of London Quaker merchants, and also by former student friends from Cambridge, Thomas Babington, Babington's brother-in-law Zachary Macaulay, and the young scholar Thomas Clarkson, who became the 'fact-finder' of the group. Wilberforce's cousins the Thorntons had a home at Clapham (then still a country village) which became the headquarters of the whole campaign, and it was not long before this group of Christian enthusiasts was dubbed the 'Clapham sect'. Opponents in Parliament were apt to dismiss their arguments as 'mere enthusiasm', and once provoked the rather worldly Charles James Fox to a memorable outburst. 'Enthusiasm, Sir?' he cried, turning to the Speaker. 'Why, there was never any good done in the world *without* enthusiasm!' It took 20 years, but John Newton lived to see the enthusiasts victorious; in 1807 traffic in slaves became illegal.

No more could be done so long as the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath absorbed the energies of England, but by 1822 Wilberforce, Clarkson and their friends felt able to launch a new Anti-Slavery Society. Once more Friends submitted a petition to Parliament, and Wilberforce himself presented it; but his own health was failing, and Thomas Fowell Buxton took his place as the chief spokesman for the slaves in the House. Buxton was not himself a Friend, but he had a Quaker mother and a Quaker wife, and the support of a new generation of Friends, including his wife's kinsman Joseph John Gurney. As a little boy Gurney had been captivated by Newton's *Authentic Narrative*; in the 1820's, as a mature Friend, his anti-slavery zeal was as strong as ever.

In 1833 the Slave Emancipation Act became law. Zachary Macaulay's son, Thomas Babington Macaulay, was a member of the parliament that passed it. He hurried from the House to tell the ailing Wilberforce the good news, and they rejoiced together. Three days later Wilberforce died, knowing that his 50 years of labour had been brought to a successful conclusion.

India had seen many changes during those 50 years. In the wake of the 1770 famine the East India Company had been compelled to ask Parliament for a loan. This was granted, but at the same time a Parliamentary Board of Control was set up, and the Company's affairs were subjected to scrutiny in a Parliamentary debate every 20 years. Pitt's India Act of 1784 laid down the principle that the Company's administration was responsible for the welfare of the people whom it governed, and after Warren Hastings retired in 1785 those who succeeded him as Governors-General were men chosen by the Board of Control from outside the ranks of the Company's own employees.

During the next 30 years these men cleaned up the worst abuses of the corrupt administration; they also greatly extended the areas under British control, so that by 1818 these included the whole of south and central India and the great Gangetic plains. Large territories within these regions were still ruled by Indian princes, but in each one was a British Residency and political agent. Much of the Maratha country was absorbed into the Bombay Presidency; the central regions where Pindari war-lords had terrorised the villages were brought under direct British rule.

Many of the officials who administered these vast territories took seriously their responsibility for the welfare of the people they governed, but among them there were wide differences of opinion about the policies which would best ensure that welfare. These differences must be understood, for they form the context of thought in which Friends worked in India throughout the 19th century. There were two main groups, one of which believed (as an opponent put it) that 'no country can be saved without English institutions'; the other school of thought argued that India's traditional organs of public life were well suited to her needs, and should be respected and maintained.

Among these who thus hoped for a continuity of Indian tradition were men who, like Warren Hastings, had a long and intimate knowledge of

the country. Mountstuart Elphinstone, John Malcolm, Charles Metcalfe, Thomas Munro – to name only a few – were among the ablest and most humane officials ever to be found in Company service. They feared lest Pitt's well-intentioned India Act should undermine national self-respect, because in practice it gave Indians no share in the government of their own country. 'People may be greatly injured,' reported Munro, 'by what *we* mean for their good . . . our present system excludes all natives from power and trust.'<sup>6</sup> Elphinstone supported him, saying that 'it is better that we should resign our power into the hands of the people for whose benefit it is entrusted [to us]'.<sup>7</sup> They had before their eyes an outstanding example of good *Indian* government; in the closing decades of the 18th century Queen Ahalyabai had ruled a prosperous kingdom with justice and compassion, with respect for her people's traditional rights, and with full use of organs of government such as the *panchayats* (councils of five) which managed the affairs of each village. John Malcolm admired Ahalyabai greatly,<sup>8</sup> and both he and Charles Metcalfe deplored any interference with the *panchayats*, whose intimate local knowledge made for wise decisions and simple, speedy justice. 'Change, to be safe or beneficial,' wrote Malcolm, 'must be the work of the society itself.'<sup>9</sup> Henry Lawrence in the next generation took the same position. 'Indians are happier under their own systems than under ours,' he declared; he respected those systems and so was able to get abuses rectified through Indian channels without giving offence.

That there *were* corruptions and abuses to be set right all thoughtful men, Indian and British, agreed. But those officials and others who belonged to the other, 'westernising' school of thought did not believe that this was possible within the traditional framework. Many British officials shared the conviction of the British middle class that the world only needed to be made like themselves, and therefore desired to see in India 'the establishment of our own principles and opinions; of our own laws, institutions, and manners; above all, . . . of our religion, and consequently of our morals'.<sup>10</sup> This project would be carried forward by means of English legal and educational systems, the use of the English language, the work of the Christian missionary. They believed that these things would make for India's true welfare, and they put their point, during the crucial Parliamentary debate of 1813, with no thought of personal advantage.<sup>11</sup>

The resulting India Act ended the East India Company's monopoly of trade, and opened its territories both to British commerce and to Christian preaching. These measures were carried through, however, with the support of people who were by no means indifferent to personal advantage, especially those who represented the new manufacturing classes created by the Industrial Revolution. Immediately, in 1814, a tract



appeared in Calcutta setting out 'the advantages of Christianity in promoting the establishment and prosperity of the British Empire'; while other enthusiasts declared that 'every triumph of Christianity is the opening of a wider market for British manufacturers.'<sup>12</sup>

Naturally these westernisers differed from the traditionalists not only in their assessment of India's political institutions but also in their attitude to her culture and religion. Warren Hastings had encouraged Indian scholarship, both Arabic and Sanskrit, and had welcomed Charles Wilkins' first English version of the *Bhagavad Gita*.<sup>13</sup> In 1793 William Carey arrived in Bengal as an independent entrepreneur, but inwardly committed to 'attempt great things for God'. For 41 years, until his death in 1834, he singlemindedly served his adopted country. A lifelong interest in natural history made him one of the founders of the Calcutta Botanical Gardens. He started a printing press, published his own Bengali translations of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, encouraged English translations of Sanskrit poetry and drama, and later launched a newspaper, *The Friend of India*. At the same time in Bombay the Governor Jonathan Duncan similarly identified himself with India, and the scholarly Justice Erskine was doing much to awaken pride in India's cultural heritage. Thomas Munro spoke for them all: 'If civilisation is to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that this country [England] will gain by the import cargo.'<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless the missionaries poured in; many of them were wise and sensitive Christians like Carey, but others gave offence by their ignorant contempt for Indian ways and their crude preaching. Moreover ordinary people in India thought of all westerners as 'Christians', including rowdy drunken sailors and greedy tyrannical indigo planters, so that the 'advantages' of Christianity were not apparent to them. About 1830 a missionary reached Lahore, in the independent kingdom of Punjab. The king, Ranjit Singh, summoned him. 'You say, you travel about for the sake of religion,' he said. 'Why, then, do you not preach to the *English* in Hindustan, *who have no religion at all?*' When the missionary later told Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General, what the King had said, Bentinck replied that 'This is, alas! the opinion of all the natives all over India!'<sup>15</sup>

This was the context in which the first 19th-century Friends began to take an interest in India. Their interest was closely linked with their anti-slavery work, and to begin with only a few Friends were involved. One of them was William Allen, who was working with Zachary Macaulay to establish a colony for freed slaves in West Africa. Some of Macaulay's Babington kinsmen were in Bombay, and possibly at their suggestion Allen got in touch with the Calcutta Botanical Gardens, and arranged for the

supply of suitable commercial plants for trial in the new colony. 'The results,' he said, 'have justified my most sanguine expectations.'<sup>16</sup>

Two or three years later a Quaker merchant and ship-owner in Liverpool, James Cropper, persuaded his Quaker friends to take advantage of the new opening for trade by the ending of the East India Company monopoly. A ship was specially built for the purpose, and named *The Bengal*.<sup>17</sup> In the autumn of 1815, at the end of her long maiden voyage, she entered the final reach of the Hugli river and dropped anchor off Calcutta. Those who watched from the shore as the beautiful vessel came up-stream saw that she carried guns, as was usual for British merchant shipping then, when the final struggle against Napoleon was in progress. But when they boarded her they found that her 'guns' were dummies, made of wood. 'Yes,' explained the crew. 'Them's *Quaker* guns. They *look* all right, they frighten the pirates away – and they cost much less than the real thing!'<sup>18</sup>

As a merchant, James Cropper dealt in sugar, among other things. As a Quaker humanitarian he was a strong opponent of slavery in all its forms. A few years' experience of the Indian trade convinced him that the quickest way to end slavery was to make it unprofitable, by exposing it to fair competition from free labour. When the new Anti-Slavery Society began its work in 1822, he urged it to work for the abolition of the import duties on sugar, which in practice favoured the slave plantations. If there were no such discrimination, he said, Indian sugar could be sold in London more cheaply than that from the slave plantations. He did not succeed at once; in view of his own part in the Indian trade it was too easy to dismiss his arguments as designed for his own profit. But they were not forgotten, and others revived them later.

Meanwhile in 1818, three years after *The Bengal's* first voyage, another ship dropped anchor at Calcutta with a cargo of Arab horses from Basra. The ship was Arab-owned, but its captain was a British 'free-mariner' named James Silk Buckingham whose mother, Thomasina Hambly, came of a Cornish Quaker family. Buckingham, though not formally a Quaker, had imbibed her Quakerly standards of integrity and humanity, and when he took command of his first ship he treated his crew with a humane and sensible discipline which was then almost unknown. The same Quakerly standards also got him into trouble; when his ship ran aground on a sand-bank, although she was practically undamaged, the owners prepared an exorbitant claim for damages. Buckingham refused to cooperate in cheating and lost his job; he moved on to work for Arab ship-owners, and learned to value Arab culture.

Arab trade routes criss-crossed the Indian Ocean, and Buckingham soon became familiar with Bombay, where after the Company's monopoly

was ended, he paid two extended visits. He was greatly attracted to Justice Erskine, and he also met the Babingtons and a public-spirited merchant named Luke Ashburner who like himself came of Quaker stock. Calcutta however was new to him. When he reported to the owner's agent there he was instructed to take his ship next to Zanzibar, and pick up a cargo of *slaves*. Slaves? Buckingham refused, once more lost his job and was stranded in a strange port.

Buckingham's stand attracted favourable notice, both from the Governor-General Lord Hastings, and from the greatly-respected merchant John Palmer, 'the friend of the poor'. Finding that Buckingham was not only an experienced sailor, but also a man of culture and wide interests, Palmer proposed that with his own backing Buckingham should provide Calcutta with an independent, serious English newspaper. Hastings was sympathetic; he believed that 'public scrutiny of public affairs' was the citizens' right, and he had recently abolished the press censorship imposed by one of his predecessors. Buckingham agreed to the proposal, and turned for advice to a distinguished Indian who was already conducting a serious newspaper in the local Bengali language and another in Persian, the cultural *lingua franca* of the Mogul Empire. This was the great Rammohun Roy, 'Father of modern India'. At their first meeting Buckingham greeted him courteously in Arabic, in Indian style, while Roy responded with equal courtesy in English. The two men worked well together.

Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal* was launched in October 1818 and was an immediate success. He used the paper to deal with matters of topical and ethical importance, both in India and in England, with which country of course many of his readers had close links. Like James Cropper he criticised the unfair tariffs on Indian sugar; he discussed the forms of slavery prevalent in southern India, and the slave trade between there and Mauritius. He dealt also with the English Corn Laws and the suffering they caused for the poor. He described with equal appreciation Rammohun Roy's advocacy of humanitarian social reform in India, and the London Quaker Joseph Southall's dignified stand for integrity in local government in England.

*The Calcutta Journal* soon began to make witty, pointed comments on some of the shadier practices of the bureaucracy and Hastings gave Buckingham a friendly warning that the senior officials who composed his Council resented this 'public scrutiny'. 'Don't set the Ganges on fire,' he said. 'My Council won't stand for it.' But Buckingham enjoyed setting the Ganges on fire, and when Hastings' term of office came to an end he paid the penalty. The Council used its temporary authority to re-impose press restrictions and send the outspoken editor back to England. As the

wise Munro commented, 'a free press and the dominion of strangers are things quite incompatible with one another.'

The Press Ordinance affected Rammohun Roy's newspapers also, and he and his friend Dwarkanath Tagore, an eminent and wealthy Calcutta citizen, decided to challenge its legality before the Privy Council in London. The whole matter attracted the sympathy of Friends, for they had stood for the freedom of the press since the earliest days of the Society. Jonathan Backhouse and others befriended the deported editor, and Charles Forbes, an 'Anglo-Indian'<sup>19</sup> who like Buckingham himself was of Quaker stock, took up his case in Parliament.

Charles Forbes' ancestors had joined the Society of Friends in its earliest days. They were friends and neighbours in Scotland of the Barclays of Ury, and the two families intermarried but not all their descendants continued as Friends. Charles Forbes' uncle had started a business in Bombay, and Charles, as a boy of 16, joined him there in 1790. For 22 years Bombay was his home; then in 1812 he returned to Britain, entered Parliament and took part in the India debate of 1813. There he said what Elphinstone (whom he probably knew) was saying in Bombay: 'Indians should be admitted to fair participation in serving the State. The more they are known, the more they will be respected.' By 1824, when Buckingham's case came up, Forbes had long been known as 'the member for India.'

Meanwhile Forbes, along with the Quakers William Allen and Jonathan Backhouse, helped Buckingham to start a new paper, *The Oriental News*, to keep the British public informed about India. In this his assistant was a young man, Frederick Denison Maurice, who was also close to Friends. Then Buckingham himself entered the 'Reform Parliament' of 1832, in which for the first time the growing industrial cities were represented, as member for Sheffield, the home of the 'Corn Law poet' Ebenezer Elliott.<sup>20</sup>

In 1833 this Parliament passed the Slave Emancipation Act, and then turned its attention to India, whose affairs were once more due for review. Rammohun Roy had come to England to give evidence, and with both Buckingham and Forbes in the House the new India Act embodied the principle of *Indian* participation in Government. As for the slave traffic between India and Mauritius, it was expected that the Slave Emancipation Act would put an end to that.

The sugar planters of Mauritius had already foreseen this threat to their labour supply, and began to replace their slaves by Indian labourers recruited on a three- or five-year contract called 'indenture'. In practice this was worse than lifelong slavery; the planter did not trouble to keep his temporary workforce healthy – it 'paid' to work them to death. Within a few years, more than 25,000 Indian workers had been 'recruited', by

fraud or by outright kidnapping, and reports began to reach Calcutta of the appalling conditions on the plantations.

A public-spirited Indian citizen, Thomas Boaz,<sup>21</sup> travelled to Mauritius, investigated conditions on the spot, and returned to Calcutta to report what he had found. There was great public indignation. On the Governor's Council in Calcutta was a younger cousin of Wilberforce himself, William Wilberforce Bird. He at once took action, suspended all 'indentured' emigration, and set up a strong, knowledgeable committee of inquiry. The committee recommended that indentured labour should be ended by applying James Cropper's principles and making it too expensive to be profitable. By that time (1835) Thomas Babington Macaulay was a member of the Law Commission in Calcutta; he drew up a code of regulations by which this policy might be carried out. But it was *not* carried out – why?

During the same years another evil substitute for slavery, the so-called 'apprenticeship' system, had been introduced in the West Indies, which had been a field of Quaker interest from the earliest days. James Cropper's son-in-law Joseph Sturge did what Boaz had done in Mauritius, and carried out an investigation on the spot. In 1838 Friends crowded the Strangers' Gallery at Westminster as Parliament heard Sturge's report and voted to forbid apprenticeship. When the result was announced they cheered so lustily that they were turned out for 'riotous behaviour'! But the West Indian planters were not much disturbed; they turned to the alternative which was still open – indentured labour from India. Friends in general knew and cared nothing about that.

Parliament then proposed to 'regulate' this traffic, as in 1783 it had sought to regulate the African slave trade. Charles Forbes opposed the Bill with all his strength. 'What about that Calcutta inquiry?' he demanded. 'Indenture is just a form of slavery; it should not be "regulated"; it should be *stopped*!' The planters' lobby was too strong for him; he failed, and Indian indentured labour was soon to be found in every sugar-planting area in the world. The findings of the responsible Calcutta committee were ignored. It was a bitter comment on the promise of the 1833 Act to associate Indians more closely with the administration.

### Notes to Chapter III

1 *Siyar Mutakharin*, quoted by Reginald Reynolds, *White Sahibs in India*, 1937, p.32.

2 R.Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 1940, p.115.

3 Isaac Wilson, 1769, quoted in A.N.Brayshaw, *The Quakers*, 3rd ed. 1946, p.179.

4 Advice of Meeting for Sufferings, 1770.

5 At that time women Friends held their own separate Yearly Meeting.

6 Evidence submitted 1813. [Not found in Parliamentary Papers.]

7 Memo. 1824, quoted in T.E.Colebrook, *Life of Elphinstone*, 1884, vol.2 p.160.

8 John Malcolm, *Memoir of Central India*, 1823, vol.1 pp.160 et seq. 'She combined talent, virtue, and energy, which made her, while she lived, a blessing to the country over which she ruled.'

9 John Malcolm, *Political History of India*, 1826, vol.2 p.185.

10 William Wilberforce, speech in the India debate, 1st July 1813, col.1069.

11 So long as the Company was purely a trading concern it had no objection to missionaries; the Lutheran pioneer Dr Fabricius officiated at Clive's wedding in Madras. When it became a territorial ruler its attitude changed (see Eyre Chatterton, *A History of the Church of England in India*, 1924, pp.102-7).

12 Anonymous Open Letter to James Cropper by 'a minister and a layman'. [Not seen.]

13 For this and other Indian classics, see chapter 1, above.

14 Testimony, House of Commons, 12th April 1813, quoted in B.Stein, *Thomas Munro*, Delhi 1989, p.162.

15 Joseph Wolff, *Travels and Adventures*, 1861, vol.2 p.71.

16 Quoted in J.Sherman, *Memoir of William Allen*, F.R.S., 1851, p.69.

17 A painting of *The Bengal*, newly launched at Greenock, is in the possession of James Cropper's descendants at Eller Green, Kendal. See front cover illustration.

18 *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites Washington Irving, 1809, to illustrate the term 'Quaker guns'. Many Quakers disapproved of them because they were a form of deceit, and Cropper and his partner Benson had other ships sailing the Atlantic unarmed. But the route to India was more hazardous, and the crew were not all Quakers. (See Henry J.Cadbury, *Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past*, Norwalk, Conn., 1972, pp.18-20.)

19 'Anglo-Indian' then meant a resident of India of British birth. The use of the term as equivalent to 'Eurasian' is modern.

20 It was characteristic of Buckingham that he should use his position in Parliament not only to oppose the Corn Laws, but also to press, with all the authority of his own experience at sea, for measures to protect common sailors from the brutalities they so often suffered.

21 The name Boaz indicates that he was a 'Luso-Indian' of mixed Indian and Portuguese blood.

## CHAPTER IV

## Sowers of Seeds : 1838 to 1860

*'Mercy and Truth are met together,  
Justice and Peace join hands.'*

PSALM 85 : 10

THE YEAR 1838 saw a great improvement in the speed of communication between India and Britain. In that year a steamship service began to operate; a route was opened via Alexandria in place of the long hazardous voyage round the Cape of Good Hope. The Suez Canal was not opened till 1869; travellers went overland from Alexandria to a Red Sea port where they re-embarked for Bombay or Calcutta. News travelled more quickly in this way, and a cosmopolitan group of British and Indian business men in Bombay, finding the time to be propitious, launched a newspaper, *The Bombay Times*.

Twenty-five years had elapsed since the East India Company's monopoly of Indian trade had been ended in 1813. For large numbers of people in India they had been years of increasing penury. The powerful British manufacturing interests had at once got a high tariff imposed on Indian textiles entering Britain, while British goods had free entry into India. During the 20 years following 1814 the import of Lancashire cotton cloth increased from 1,000,000 to 31,000,000 yards, while the export of Indian textiles fell to one 13th of what it had been. Charles Forbes saw what was happening; again and again he raised his voice in Parliament to condemn the discrimination against Indian sugar, Indian textiles, Indian shipping. 'If India were governed by an independent ruler,' he told the House in 1822, 'she would not submit to this.' For centuries the spinning and weaving of cotton cloth had been a cottage industry, in which villagers were engaged in supplying their own local needs during the season when agricultural work was at a stand-still. The flood of 'cheap' Lancashire

cloth brought disaster. By 1834, as Lord Bentinck wrote, 'the bones of the cotton weavers [were] bleaching the plains of India.'

Forbes pointed to other burdens which British rule had imposed – the Government monopoly of the manufacture of a basic necessity, salt; the oppressive land tax, which in many areas far exceeded the Indian ruler's traditional share of the yield of his subject's fields. Forbes was not the only one to protest; knowledgeable officials in India reported that 'the people are taxed to the utmost pitch of extortion . . . villages are deserted, their riches mercilessly drained away.'<sup>1</sup>

Small wonder that from the mid-20s onwards there were famines. In 1838 famine was severe and widespread, and thanks to the steamship service news of it reached England in a comparatively short time. Children, it was reported, were being sold into slavery by desperate parents who could find no other way to save their lives, and who themselves were being forced into the slavery of indentured labour. Conditions recalled those of the 1770 famine, when Sir William Jones had seen cargoes of children brought down-river and openly sold as domestic slaves in Calcutta.

Fowell Buxton and his Quaker friend Thomas Hodgkin set to work, along with another Friend named William Howitt. Howitt publicised these calamities, and the conditions which had led to them, in a book called *Colonisation and Christianity*. 'Colonisation' was a pejorative term. A colony, according to contemporary wits was an unhappy place 'made expressly to be plundered',<sup>2</sup> and Howitt's title was meant to draw attention to the contrast between England's profession of Christianity and her practice of plunder.

Howitt's book was read by Jonathan Backhouse's cousin Joseph Pease. Pease was a Quaker business man in Darlington, whose motto was said to be: Love all men and fear none. Like many other Friends he was doing all he could to secure the abolition of the Corn Laws in England and of slavery in Britain's overseas dominions. Along with *Colonisation and Christianity* he also read a Government White Paper, *Slavery in India*. He was already over 60 years of age, but the two books moved him so strongly that he decided to give up his business and do whatever he could to alleviate the sufferings of the Indian poor. His first act was to go to London to ask the advice of the two most knowledgeable men available, Charles Forbes and Charles Metcalfe, who had by then retired after many years of Company service in India.

The next step, taken with their support, was to find a way of placing the *facts* of the situation before the British public. 'There is no argument like matter of fact,' Pease would say. He organised a Society: 'The British Society for bettering the conditions of our fellow-subjects the natives of

British India.' The name well describes its purpose, but was too cumbersome to be practical, and was soon shortened to 'British India Society'. It attracted friends old and new. Thomas Clarkson, now an old man, welcomed it; so did James Buckingham and Jonathan Backhouse, and the radical Joseph Hume, who had been for some years a Company servant in India. Hume brought in George Thompson, who had already been associated with Joseph Sturge in the campaign to end apprenticeship on the West India sugar plantations. Thompson was an able orator, and had used his gifts to support both the abolition of slavery and the abolition of the Corn Laws. The secretary of the society, Francis Carnac Brown, had been born and lived in Malabar, and knew at first hand the evils of bond-slavery there. He had enthusiastic young helpers in his nephew J. M. Ludlow, Buckingham's journalist-colleague F. D. Maurice, and two young Friends, John Bright of Rochdale and Fowell Buxton's nephew W. E. Forster, who had been learning the woollen trade in Pease's business at Darlington. Last but not least the Society had the devoted service of Pease's daughter Elizabeth, who organised support from women – and much more.

The first public meeting was held at Devonshire House, then the London headquarters of the Society of Friends, at the time of their Yearly Meeting in May 1839. This was possible because of the high esteem in which Joseph Pease was held by his fellow-Quakers; it was also a public recognition that the welfare of India could rightly claim the attention of Friends as a body. The speakers included the Liverpool Quaker merchant Thomas Frankland; and the East India Company's administrator John Briggs, who had direct knowledge of the burdens of the land tax.

A few weeks later, on 6th July, the British India Society was formally inaugurated at a second public meeting at the Freemasons' Hall, at which its most prominent political supporter, Lord Brougham, took the chair. Thomas Frankland spoke again; other speakers, echoing Thomas Munro and John Malcolm, described India as a land at least as 'civilised and enlightened' as Britain, possessed of her own effective organs of government, such as those 'little republican municipalities', the village *panchayats*.<sup>3</sup>

There followed some years of vigorous campaigning, and in 1843 the British India Society welcomed William Wilberforce Bird's Act, which declared any form of slavery to be non-cognisable in law. 'You have had something to do with this,' said the Directors' secretary to Joseph Pease as he gave him the news. But the Act proved to be a dead letter, as it was bound to be when the local officials whose duty it was to enforce it were themselves implicated. Malabar slavery was one of those evils which, as John Malcolm pointed out, can be rectified only by society itself, and vestiges of it have survived into independent India.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of its sincere desire to be of service, the British India Society was hampered by the fact that so few of its members, apart from Charles Forbes and Francis Carnac Brown, had any real knowledge of India. They were divided among themselves, like the officials of the East India Company, about what policies really *would* 'better the condition of their fellow-subjects' there. The 'traditionalist' point of view had been well put at the inaugural meeting, but not many of the audience would realise what it implied. Pease himself, and most of the Friends who supported him, were business men and inheritors of the Industrial Revolution, and the attitude of the 'westernisers' was more natural to them. It had been expressed a few years earlier by John Bright, then a young man of 22, whose first recorded speech voiced the hope that India would receive 'the blessings of civilisation and Christianity, the extension of British commerce, and opportunity for the consumption of British manufacturers'.<sup>5</sup>

Bright spoke then with sincere conviction, but even among the Quaker supporters of the British India Society motives could be unconsciously mixed. Among Friends success in business tended to be regarded as a virtue, failure was frowned upon. The Society's speakers appealed to the double motive; if India were fairly treated, they argued, there would be wider markets and increased trade for the British business man. Honesty, in fact, was the best policy.

These speakers also made use of James Cropper's ideas about how to get rid of slavery. Given a fair deal, they said, Indian cotton could compete successfully on the market with the slave-grown cotton of the USA; slavery would end, India would benefit, so would the Lancashire cotton mills! Had not free-grown Indian indigo already driven slave-grown indigo off the market? The argument reveals their ignorance of facts notorious in India: indigo was *not* 'free-grown'; a few years later the peasants were to rise in rebellion against the brutalities they suffered.<sup>6</sup> As for cotton, no one asked *why* India should send her cotton to be woven in Lancashire, while her own skilled weavers were dying of starvation because they had no work. Forbes had pleaded for a fair deal, not for Indian cotton, but for Indian *textiles*. Why should India accept the British verdict that 'she can never again be a great manufacturing country'?<sup>7</sup> The British India Society did not raise such fundamental questions.

In 1840 mixed motives came into play over the opium war with China. The East India Company controlled the production of opium in India, Calcutta merchants shipped it to the Chinese off-shore island, Lin Tun and Hong Kong. From there in defiance of Chinese law it was smuggled into China. The Chinese government protested, and when its protests were ignored seized and destroyed the cargo of the opium clippers. The merchants complained, and Britain's response was the opium war.

Joseph Pease denounced both the immoral trade and the dishonourable war, but some members of the British India Society (including some Friends) were reluctant to support him. They did not want to see an early end of the war, because so long as it lasted profits could be made from speculation in tea, of which China was then the only source of supply. Pease refused to compromise; he would have nothing to do with 'measures tainted with the leaven of expediency', and considered that 'a man whose determination does not rise when difficulty increases is good for nothing.'

Pease was equally outspoken about the responsibilities of the wealthy men of India. In 1842 Dwarkanath Tagore paid a visit to England. He was Rammohun Roy's friend, and like him for honourable reasons supported the 'westernisers'; he was the first Indian to join the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and in 1826 he had financed the Hindu College, 'the first centre of modern education in India'. He was also a wealthy landlord, a hard-headed Calcutta merchant, and the owner of one of the opium clippers whose cargo had been burnt on the wharves of Canton. He lived in a style which earned him the popular title of 'Prince', and he was lionised by the fashionable society of London. Pease was not impressed; he felt no respect, he said, 'for Indians of rank and wealth who, while moving in courtly circles, conceal those miseries of their poor countrymen which it is their duty to get amended.'

Dwarkanath however was impressed by the British India Society's speaker George Thompson, and invited him to Calcutta to work for the Landholders' Society. Thompson hesitated, but finally agreed; Calcutta newspapers which knew his previous record welcomed him, although they were surprised that he should be associated with the landlords. Dwarkanath himself helped Thompson to start a branch of the British India Society in Calcutta.<sup>8</sup> It attracted a number of young Bengalis who had waited 10 years in vain for the opportunity for public service promised in the India Act of 1833. Nothing had changed, and they were feeling frustrated. Thompson and the Society introduced them to the elements of political organisation, and thus sowed a seed which was destined to grow.

During the same years another seed was sown in Bombay, where interest in the British India Society was fostered by Buckingham's friend Luke Ashburner and a leading Indian citizen Jagannath Shankar Seth. Like Dwarkanath, Jagannath had helped to found a modern college, the Elphinstone College; he also encouraged the education of girls. This Bombay group however felt uneasy about the wording of the Society's first manifesto, in which Pease had appealed to the 'Christian feelings' of his British readers. What did that mean? Was the Society going to proselytise? The question reflected India's wide-spread uneasiness about what a Company official in 1834 had called 'the rising enthusiasm for

conversion'.<sup>9</sup> Forbes understood these fears, and the ambiguous phrase was replaced in the manifesto by the words 'humane feelings'. The Bombay branch of the British India Society included members of all the major religious communities.

Joseph Pease himself, in his speeches in England, sought always to arouse these humane feelings. He had himself been specially moved by the reports he had read of how once-prosperous villages had been deserted, leaving their fields to revert to scrub-jungle, while the poor died of hunger. In meeting after meeting he declared, in a vivid phrase, that 'the fertile lands of India are in possession of the tiger!' At one meeting his lively young helper W. E. Forster brought laughter into the solemnity by proposing, in doggerel verse, that the Society would capture more attention if it changed its name:

Call it, in order to gain notoriety,  
The Tiger-expelling-from-jungle Society!

When Joseph Pease died in 1846 the British India Society had not succeeded in expelling many tigers; circumstances, and the weaknesses and limitations of some of its members, had hampered its work; the complexity of the situation with which it was trying to deal was not fully understood, and recurrent famine was to press heavily upon the poor for another 50 years and more. Nevertheless the seed had been sown, both in India and in Britain, and those whom Pease had inspired carried forward the work he had begun. He was right to insist that the needs of the poor cannot be met by 'measures tainted with the leaven of expediency'; he was right to declare that their condition cannot be 'bettered' without responsible care for India's land. His service to India was not wholly forgotten; 100 years later, in 1948, representatives of a newly-independent India laid a tribute of flowers on his simple grave at Darlington.

His successor as Quaker spokesman for India was John Bright, who had entered Parliament in 1843. He was one of the first Friends to do so; many of them regarded Parliamentary work as spiritually dangerous, and during the anti-slavery campaigns they had left it to Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton. Elders now warned Bright, who was only 32, of the risks he ran. He replied with courteous humility that he had no desire for personal advantage, but only that national policy should be based on 'morality and truth'. 'I feel a strong love of what is just,' he added, 'and a strong sympathy for those who suffer.'

During Bright's first years in Parliament his main work was therefore to help Cobden, Buckingham and others to secure the repeal of the Corn Laws. Then in 1847, after Joseph Pease and Charles Forbes had both died, his attention turned to India again. By then he had become MP for Manchester, the 'cotton capital' of his own native Lancashire, and



he asked why cotton could not be obtained from India, as the British India Society had urged, instead of from the slave plantations of the southern States. Parliament refused to conduct any inquiry into the matter, so Bright persuaded the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to send its own investigator to India. His report, *Western India*, was published in 1851, and confirmed Bright in his opinion that India's political grievances must first be redressed.

The next Parliamentary review of Indian affairs was due in 1853. This was Bright's opportunity, and he prepared to present 'the mounting evidence of oppression and misrule'. As early as 1839, J. S. Urquhart, a banker in Agra, India-born and knowledgeable, had warned Joseph Pease that there would be 'retribution within 20 years' if nothing were done about India's just grievances.<sup>10</sup> Fourteen of those 20 years had passed; the burden of taxation was as heavy as ever, and racial insolence continued unchanged. Emily Eden, Lord Auckland's observant sister, wrote scathingly of the treatment meted out by her fellow-countrymen to the clerks in the government offices, Indian and Eurasian alike: 'Very well-educated, quiet men. But *we*, with *our* pure Norman or Saxon blood, cannot really think contemptuously enough of them.' She had put her finger on what hurt most, contempt – shown not only by officials and bullying planters, but also by those Christian preachers who 'blackened other faiths in public'. 'Contempt,' said Syed Ahmed Khan, one of Bright's greatest Indian contemporaries, 'is an ineradicable wrong.'

Added to these social grievances were political ones. The Act of 1833 was disregarded; the English 'kept all positions in their own caste', and were compared unfavourably with the Mogul rulers 'who had used merit wherever found'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover during the 1840's many formerly Indian-ruled territories, including the kingdom of Punjab, were annexed to 'British India' with what Bright's old friend W. E. Forster called 'a criminal contempt for native customs and rights'. British rule was not necessarily an improvement. 'The traveller may discern the boundaries between the dominions of the East India Company and those of native rulers by the superior condition of the country and the people *in the latter*,' wrote *The Bombay Times* in 1848. Mountstuart Elphinstone, in old age, said much of the same thing.

Bright himself had a number of contacts in Bombay. Among them were men like Jagannath Shankar Seth who had been associated with the Bombay branch of the British India Society. Some of these men had recently helped to form the 'Bombay Association', in which young leaders from various religious communities, including Dadabhai Naoroji the Parsee and Mohammed Ali Rogay the Muslim, were working together for the public welfare. Bright was in touch with this group, and also with

some of the business men who managed *The Bombay Times*. A different kind of link with India came through W. E. Forster, who had married a daughter of Dr Thomas Arnold of Rugby. Her brother William Delatfield had been for some years in East India Company service, and Bright soon learned of his conclusion (expressed in a semi-autobiographical novel called *Oakfield*) that 'the magnificent work of civilising Asia through British influence is *humbug*!'<sup>12</sup>

When the Company's Charter was debated in Parliament in 1853 Bright warned the House that India 'might be goaded into insurrection' if her wrongs were not redressed. He pleaded for 'a humane and liberal sway', and for '*very much* wider employment in government service' of Indians themselves.<sup>13</sup> 'Mr Bright looks at India like an honest Englishman,' wrote an observer, 'anxious that England should do her duty there.'<sup>14</sup> But powerfully as he spoke, his warnings went unheeded, and in the summer of 1857 the insurrection came. The British virtually lost control of large areas of northern India, and many innocent people suffered, Indian and British alike. After bitter fighting British authority was re-established, and there followed an ugly outcry in Britain for 'vengeance' upon India. The British Quaker journals protested strongly against this, but Britain was in no mood to listen. When the Governor-General, the large-hearted Lord Canning, set to work to administer 'justice, *not* revenge', he was publicly taunted. 'Clemency Canning!' the newspapers jeered, 'puling, sentimental and *Quaker-like*!'

During those tragic months John Bright was a sick man. The India Act of 1853 had been followed in 1854 by the criminal folly of the Crimean War. Bright had opposed it with every ounce of his strength, and had suffered a serious breakdown, from which he began to recover only in the autumn of 1857. Then while he was still an invalid Birmingham returned him to Parliament unopposed, and he prepared for his constituency a statement about India, declaring that England would be guilty of the gravest dereliction of duty if her statesmen did not combine 'to work what good is possible out of so much evil'.

By 1858 Bright was back in Parliament, urging yet again that there must be Indian partnership in government:

There are thousands of people competent to take any position [of trust]. If there were in the Governor's Council of each Province *at least* two or three intelligent natives in whom *the people* have confidence, you would have begun to unite the government with the governed. Unless you do that, no government will be safe.

He had other proposals to meet other grievances:



Let there be a Proclamation to reach every subject of the British crown and the territory of every Indian prince. Offer a general and complete amnesty. Promise the natives of India a security for their property as great as we have here. Tell them that we hold inviolable the rights of conscience, and that no kind of wrong shall be done to those who profess the religions held to be true in India.

Following this debate East India Company rule was ended and India brought directly under the Crown. The Queen's Proclamation embodied much of what Bright asked, and was well received in India. But Bright knew, none better, that it would not be easy to put it into practice, and in August 1859 he made a final appeal:

That Proclamation has in it the basis of all you should aim at. If you treat the natives of India as they ought to be treated, you will not require 400,000 men to help you to govern. . . . Look at your responsibilities. In that unfortunate country you have destroyed every form of government but your own; millions are deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past, and if I speak to you earnestly now it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart.

As that speech makes clear, the 'westernisers' had triumphed over the 'traditionalists'. Bright's pleas were ignored; the hopes raised by the Queen's Proclamation were not fulfilled. Bright wanted the army reduced, but the number of British troops in India increased. Local initiative was replaced by centralised 'efficiency'; it became more difficult for local officials who knew their Districts to exercise a wise flexibility. Many such officials sympathised with the despairing cultivators in the 'indigo risings' of 1860, but their voices were not heard. In the same year some Districts of Upper India suffered famine. The British India Society had been succeeded, under Bright's leadership, by the Indian Reform Society, which pressed the government to take action against famine, and to give the indigo workers a fair hearing. But the Indian Reform Society got no support; it could not raise even a minimum budget, and Bright was compelled to wind it up.

Soon afterwards, Bright refused an invitation to become Secretary of State for India, because he knew that in the conditions which then prevailed he would be unable to carry out the policies he believed to be right. Nevertheless he did not give up the struggle, he continued to bring his Quaker standards to bear on Indian public affairs. After 1860 he gave his attention chiefly to matters like famine, which directly affected the poor. 'I am supported,' he wrote, 'by the hope that I am sowing some good seed in men's hearts and minds, and that fruit may one day not be wanting.'

In 1838, when Joseph Pease was planning his British India Society to combat hunger in India, and John Bright was working in the Anti Corn Law League to combat hunger in Britain. Bright had adopted a motto:

The needy shall not always be forgotten,  
The hope of the poor shall not always be in vain.

The words are found in the Bible, in the ninth psalm. Their spirit was to inspire the work which both Pease and Bright did, during the years that followed, on behalf of an India they never saw.

### Notes to Chapter IV

- 1 J. Briggs, *The Present Land Tax in India*, 1830, and F.J. Shore, *Notes on Indian Affairs*, 1837, chap. 17, vol 1 pp. 168-181.
- 2 I. Everett, *Observations on India*, 1853. [Quotation not found, but the author does conclude that 'the rule of conquerors, strangers, and white men, over natives, blacks and heathen, cannot but be a bad one, make what regulations you please' (p. 178).]
- 3 There is a lively account of this meeting in John H. Bell, *British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago*, 1891, pp. 65-68.
- 4 The Bonded Liberation Fronts of India and Pakistan still struggle in the 1990's to end debt bondage and child servitude. They have the support of Anti-Slavery International, which is the lineal descendant of the Anti-Slavery Societies of the 1820s.
- 5 Bright was proposing a vote of thanks to James Buckingham for a lecture given in Rochdale in 1833.
- 6 The abuses of forced cultivation of indigo by peasants for whom it was a loss-making crop are set out in an official report, *Indigo Cultivation in Bengal*, discussed in *The Calcutta Review*, vol. 34, 1860, pp. 355-377.
- 7 R.M. Grindlay, 1837, quoted in Daniel Thorner, *Investment in Empire*, Philadelphia 1950, p. 6.
- 8 A contemporary account of the inauguration, 20th April 1843, is reprinted in *Nineteenth Century Studies* no. 4, 1973, pp. 445-453. This journal is published by the Bibliographical Research Centre, Calcutta.
- 9 Quoted in H.H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, 1934, p. 726.
- 10 His warning may be compared with a later comment: 'If Government had paid attention to Agra newspapers before the Mutiny, it would not have been so

ignorant of the state of public feeling.' C. Bonwetsch, 1861, in the archives of the Church Missionary Society.

11 *The Hindu Pioneer*, Calcutta 1835.

12 W.D. Arnold, *Oakfield*, 2nd ed. 1854, vol. 1 p. 159 (chap. 8).

13 This and subsequent quotations are from Bright's published speeches.

14 Edmund Whitty, *History of the Session 1852-53*, quoted in G.M. Trevelyan, *Life of John Bright*, 1913, p. 171.

## CHAPTER V

### Calcutta: Invitation and Response : 1861 to 1864

*There stood a Macedonian appealing to him:  
'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 16 : 9

IN 1861, EXACTLY 200 YEARS after the first Quaker messenger to India had reported his experiences to George Fox, two Indian visitors appeared at the Friends Yearly Meeting in London. They were Quakers, they said, from Calcutta. The English Friends were startled: how *could* there be Quakers in Calcutta?

An answer to that question must be sought in the life of Calcutta in the first half of the 19th century. During the 100 years which had elapsed since Fort William had been established, the original Bengali population had been augmented by Armenians and Jews, and by immigrants from the various European trading stations along the Hugli river. Many of these were 'East Indians', that is to say people of mixed blood, and prominent among them were the Luso-Indians, the largely mercantile part-Portuguese community to which Thomas Boaz belonged. At one time Portuguese had been the *lingua franca* of all the coastal cities, but by the end of the 18th century English had largely taken its place.

There were two English-speaking Protestant churches in Calcutta, the 'Old Mission Church', and the Lal Bazaar Baptist Church, and many of the 'East Indians' were associated with them. In 1809, aware of the need for education, the Baptist Church founded the 'Calcutta Benevolent Institution'; five years later, in 1814, its managers wrote to Joseph Lancaster, the Quaker pioneer of education for the poor in London, and requested him to send them a trained teacher. Lancaster sent James

Penney (not himself a Friend), who from 1817 onwards made the school his life-work.<sup>1</sup> There were pupils from many communities, but it was the Luso-Indians ('Portuguese' as he called them) who set the pace. His report is revealing:

The Bengalis see that the Portuguese, by having a trifling acquaintance with English, obtain from the Europeans the most respectable situations as writers etc. . . . instruction for them is a medium to wealth.

Some of the 'well-educated, quiet men' whom Emily Eden saw treated with such arrogant contempt may have had their education in this school.

In 1840 a young Friend named Saunderson Walker travelled on one of his father's merchant ships from Gateshead-on-Tyne to Calcutta, where he spent several weeks while the ship unloaded and re-loaded cargo. He was a modest, observant young man, and his Journal<sup>2</sup> describes how he made friends with young Bengalis, who invited him to their homes and talked of the changes which were taking place in their traditional society.

The pioneer of these changes was Buckingham's friend Rammohun Roy. Rammohun was a Brahmin, but he had grown up in Patna, a centre of Muslim culture, and had a scholarly knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian literature. His sympathies were with the 'westernisers' of his time, and his spirit of rational inquiry was a challenge to the old ways in many fields.

One challenge was to the authority of scripture, which Rammohun recognised only when it carried conviction to his own mind and conscience. Another was to popular superstition. In Roy's lifetime the influence of the Saud brotherhood was still strong, and like them he rejected the belief that Ganges water had a magically sanctifying power; like them he refused to take an oath. When he read the Gospels, their record of Jesus deeply moved him, and in 1818 he published his reflections in a little book: *The Precepts of Jesus, the guide to Peace and Happiness*. Could not people of all religious traditions, he asked, accept Jesus as a guide to right living? What could be better than 'that grand moral principle, do unto others as you would be done by'? Could not 'a church of God', transcending all sectarian divisions, be founded on the words of Peter the Apostle: 'In every nation he that fears God and does what is right is acceptable to Him'?<sup>3</sup>

Rammohun began to plan for such a church, which he thought should combine the monotheism of Islam, the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, and the philosophy of the Upanishads, and a few years later, in 1828, the Brahmo Samaj came into existence. Rammohun was disappointed that it did not find favour with Christian missionaries, who disapproved both of

his emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, and of his insistence on the good to be found in other than Christian traditions.

In 1831 Rammohun was called to England to give evidence in preparation for the India debate of 1833. He was already known to some Friends because of his friendship with Buckingham and his support of the freedom of the press, and when his ship docked at Liverpool he had a friendly welcome from James Cropper and other Quaker merchants there. He never saw India again; in 1833 he died in England. But his influence in Calcutta lived on, and played its part in the genesis of the Quaker group.

Bitter disputes were taking place among Calcutta Christians about the rite of baptism. The 'Old Mission Church' practised infant baptism, the Baptists did not, they baptised adults on profession of faith. But they too argued hotly about whether the new member should be immersed in water or merely sprinkled with it. Sensitive men and women turned away from these quarrels in disgust, as the 'seekers' in 17th-century England had turned away from the theological quarrels of their own day. They were attracted by Rammohun's comment that faith in the water of baptism might be as irrational as faith in the water of the Ganges, but they did not join his Brahmo Samaj, perhaps because it seemed at that time too purely intellectual to meet their needs.

One of these Calcutta 'seekers' was a man called William Gaumisse. His name is the Portuguese Gomez in French spelling; possibly his ancestors were among the Luso-Indians who took refuge in French-ruled Chandernagore during Clive's campaigns in Bengal. Some time probably about 1856 he found help in his spiritual search for some Quaker books which, as he put it, 'fell in his way'.

It is not very surprising that Quaker books should be found on a Calcutta bookstall. Saunderson Walker described how the booksellers' touts would run alongside his palanquin in the streets, and thrust specimens of their wares, attractive and cheap, through the curtains. The merchants and officials who travelled from England to India on the sailing ships provided themselves with plenty of reading matter for the 15-week voyage, and some of them, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, had Quaker connections.<sup>4</sup> Walker himself, in the course of his own business, met a man who 'still had something of the appearance and manner of a Friend' – a description which implies that he had formerly been a Friend. There were in short a number of ways in which Quaker books might reach the Calcutta market.

What is remarkable is that the books Gaumisse found were so well-fitted to meet the needs of the Calcutta 'seekers'. The first was *An Apology for the true Christian Divinity*, published in 1674 by Robert Barclay, whose family in those days was so closely linked with the Forbes. Barclay wrote with the power and assurance of personal conviction:

Not by strength of arguments came I to receive and bear witness to the Truth, but by being secretly reached by the Life . . . by God's spirit shining in the heart, enlightening the understanding.

This pure Light which is in *all*, he went on, is known by its power to call forth goodness, so that those who obey its leadings

feel themselves turned from the evil to the good, and learn to do to others as they would be done by, in which Christ himself affirms all to be included.

And this true church includes all, 'both among heathen, Turks, Jews, Christians . . . of whatsoever nation or people they be', who by obedience are 'cleansed from the evil of their ways'.

For readers in Calcutta such words vividly recalled those of Rammohun Roy, some of them almost to the letter. But there was also something more, the experience of the Life being known 'not by strength of arguments', but in the warmth and tenderness of loving human fellowship. Gaumisse and his friends were captured, mind and heart together.

Along with Barclay's *Apology* Gaumisse had picked up two other books. One of them was *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, published in 1806 by that Thomas Clarkson who worked so closely with Friends in the cause of the slaves; the other was the *Memoirs* of Clarkson's younger Quaker fellow-worker Joseph John Gurney. Through Clarkson's book the Calcutta group learned of the origin and history of the Society of Friends, and learned that it did not practise that water-baptism which was causing so much trouble in Calcutta. Gurney's *Memoirs*, published only in 1854 after Gurney's death, introduced them to a man of great humility, courtesy and scholarship, who loved the Bible deeply and used the Christian language familiar to them, but at the same time declared it to be his

firm conviction that all men receive a measure of divine light . . . so that those who believe in it and obey it are led to fear God and to keep His law as it is written in their hearts.<sup>5</sup>

Those words too would recall Rammohun, and so would Gurney's interest in the 'Quaker-like' teaching and practice of the Saudis.<sup>6</sup>

Gaumisse and his friends began to worship together in the way which Barclay and Clarkson described. Some of them were 'East Indians' including a family with the English name Howatson; others were Bengalis with traditional Hindu or Muslim names.<sup>7</sup> The Meeting grew, for it was 'reached by the Life'. The visit to London in 1861 seems to have been decided on because circumstances made it possible. The two travellers were a married couple, Mariano and Cecilia D'Ortez, whose family home was in the old Dutch trading station Chinsurah. Mariano was a

'commission agent' whose shipping contacts, it seems, enabled him and his wife to work their passage to England. They carried with them a letter from their fellow-Quakers in Calcutta to Friends in London.

There was however no warm and ready welcome for those who had come so far with such a wonderful story. Thomas Hodgkin, that long-standing friend of India, cared for the travellers and asked permission to introduce them to the Yearly Meeting, but there were many difficulties to overcome before his request was granted. At last, after being kept waiting for hours outside closed doors, the visitors were admitted and their letter was read. It asked for 'a Quaker missionary' to help Calcutta Friends to grow spiritually. There was silence; no-one was 'moved of the Lord' to respond. Three weeks later the Indian Friends returned home, taking with them some more Quaker books, but no assurance of the personal support which they desired.

Fortunately that was not the end of the story. In due course an account of the Indian visit to London reached Friends in Australia, and two of them, Frederick Mackie and his brother-in-law Edward May, responded to the Indian request. They reached Calcutta in November 1862, and spent the next 10 weeks doing all they could to help the Indian Friends. They found a Meeting of between 30 and 40 people, some 15 of whom regarded themselves as fully committed Friends. Mackie and May accepted them as such, and helped them in further study of Quaker practices. There was great interest in the testimony against 'fighting with outward weapons'. What would Friends have done, asked the Indians, during the insurrection of 1857? What were they doing *now* in the American Civil War? These discussions were of great value, but after the Australians had returned home it did not prove possible to maintain any effective contact.

Just before the Australians left, at the end of January 1863, three English Friends reached Calcutta. The leader was Russell Jeffrey, who for nearly 20 years had 'felt a leading to visit the peoples of India in the love of the Gospel'. The Indian visit to London Yearly Meeting in 1861 decided him that the time for the visit had come. He made elaborate plans and arranged for two younger Friends, Henry Hipsley and William Brewin, to accompany him. He also obtained introductions to the Viceroy, and to senior British officials and British missionary leaders, and undertook an extensive preaching tour of India which lasted about 15 months.

Jeffrey also carried an introduction to one distinguished Indian. This was Dwarkanath Tagore's son Devendranath, who had become a greatly revered leader of the Brahmo Samaj. Their meeting however was scarcely more than a courtesy call, for they had little in common. Devendranath followed Indian religious traditions, and was 'not in favour of any revolutionary measures of reform which might have the effect of alienating the general

body of his countrymen'.<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey was a 'westerniser', who believed it to be Britain's duty to 'civilise and christianise' India. He carried with him copies of a book of selections from the Bible, called *Scripture Lessons for Schools*, which had been compiled by the Quaker William Allen, and did his best to induce officials to prescribe this as a general text-book in education.

Calcutta was then the capital city of India, and Jeffrey and his companions spent their first five weeks there. They met the Indian Friends and attended their Meetings for Worship, but they were not able to relate to them so easily as the Australians had done. There were a number of reasons for this, one of which was the Quaker attitude to water-baptism. For the Indian Friends, in view of their own origins, the rejection of the outward rite was important. In his first public meetings Jeffrey too expounded the Quaker view, and his Indian audiences 'eagerly laid hold of the fact that there are good Christians in the world who have never been baptised'. But he found that the missionaries who helped him to organise his preaching tour were embarrassed by his reference to this Quaker tradition, and he soon ceased to speak about it.<sup>9</sup> When some of the young men who had heard him speak suggested 'forming a body of Quaker disciples', he did not even introduce them to the 'body of Quaker disciples' which was already in existence!<sup>10</sup> In the context of his mission to 'the peoples of India' the Calcutta Friends were of merely marginal interest to him, and it has been suggested that he hesitated to recognise them lest, when formally acknowledged, they should become a financial burden on London Yearly Meeting. If that was so, it shows how little he understood of India. From his own background of secure prosperity the Indian Friends *seemed* to him poor and insecure; in fact, every one who can be traced had regular employment and adequate pay, and probably others besides Mariano D'Ortez owned family property.<sup>11</sup>

Another obstacle in the way of natural human relationships was the class-consciousness of the time, reinforced as it was in India by the racial snobbery of the British, which after 1857 had become worse than ever. Jeffrey, who moved in the upper levels of the British social hierarchy, found it very difficult to meet Indians as equals. After he and his party had left Calcutta two other English Friends, the brothers Benjamin and William Hayllar, lived in the city for a time. They were English workmen, and they were employed by the new East Indian Railway to train its Indian and 'East Indian' employees in essential skills. The Hayllars would not have been accepted in the social circles in which Jeffrey moved, but they made friends easily with the Indian Quakers and were active members of the Meeting so long as they remained in Calcutta. After that no more is known until 20 years later, when the Meeting was still alive.

That then is the Indian side of the story. What of the English side? Why in 1861 did London Yearly Meeting give the Indian Friends such a cool reception? The short answer is that the Yearly Meeting itself had reached a time of crisis.

The new 'enthusiasm' which Whitefield and the Wesleys had inspired had resulted not only in work for the emancipation of the slaves, but also in a great desire to carry the Christian gospel to the ends of the earth. The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1795 by enthusiasts of the 'Clapham Sect'; the Baptist Missionary Society was inspired by William Carey; other churches followed suit, and Quaker enthusiasts soon began to urge that Friends should do the same.

For a long time they were unsuccessful. Comfortably prosperous Friends had no desire for such adventures, and their apathy was nothing new. 'You that grow rich in earthly things,' George Fox had written in 1666, 'take heed lest you leave the service of the Lord and His business in minding your own.'<sup>12</sup> By 1830 rich Friends had found a specious excuse for doing nothing: supporting missionaries would be no better than paying 'hireling priests'! James Cropper put his finger on the truth: 'The love of the comforts of this world so prevails among us that it would be difficult to find members of *our* Society willing to make the sacrifices those do who are called, by some of us, *hirelings*.'<sup>13</sup>

During the quarter-century which followed, the work of Pease and Bright for India was inspired by the same deep religious concern as had prompted the earlier work for the slaves. Bright felt that he 'had been called as distinctly' to his work in Parliament as others were called to ministry in Meeting, though he very rarely spoke of it.<sup>14</sup> Other Friends were even more reticent. W. E. Forster described his own father, who gave heroic service during the Irish famine of the 1840's, as having such reverence for religion that it seemed to him 'almost profanity to talk thereof'.<sup>14a</sup> Such men were not likely to become 'publishers of Truth'.

This reticence came to be questioned by one of the most respected Friends in the country, George Richardson. He had been a boy of 10 years old when in 1783 Friends had first petitioned Parliament against the slave trade; for more than 70 years he had seen their service of the needy and the oppressed. The Quaker Saunderson Walker, who visited Calcutta in 1840, was his nephew; he must have listened with interest to the young man's account of his experiences there. Shortly afterwards, in 1842, he had another visitor from Calcutta. This was Dr Marshman, the scholarly Baptist missionary who had succeeded William Carey, and who told Richardson that in his opinion Quakers would be more acceptable to India, as preachers of the Gospel, than most of the other churches. Over the years, Richardson reflected. Should Friends, he asked himself, merely

work 'to improve men's temporal condition'; should they not also seek 'to turn their minds to God'? Finally in 1859, when he himself was 86, he shared these thoughts with other Friends in a series of personal letters which impressed all their recipients.

By 1859 however the task of turning men's minds to God meant different things to different people. From the very beginning of the century fear of the possible spread of a 'godless' French revolution drove large numbers of people to seek security in authority, in the authority of the Bible, in the authority of dogma. This fear was one of the factors which induced Parliament, between 1793 and 1813, to change its mind about the admission of Christian missionaries to India. Many prosperous Friends shared these attitudes and began to fear any independent thought on matters of religion. The humbler Friends, the farmers and artisans, were more disposed to maintain the old Quaker position, that the final 'authority' was not the Bible but the Inward Light, the Teacher in the heart.

Similar differences arose in the United States, where Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, like London, was led by wealthy Friends who took the authoritarian doctrinal position. Disputes became so bitter that in 1827 the humbler rural Friends, led by Elias Hicks, withdrew and formed a separate 'Hicksite' Yearly Meeting of their own; feeling ran high, each side was blind to any truth at all in their adversaries' point of view. In London the differences did not result in separation, thanks largely to Joseph John Gurney, who was able to help each party to learn from the other. Nevertheless the emphasis changed. The London Epistle of 1827 had affirmed the old Quaker conviction that 'vital Christianity consisteth not in words but in power'; in 1836 the Yearly Meeting declared that 'there can be no appeal from Holy Scripture to any authority whatsoever'. It was the general opinion that to insist on the supremacy of scripture was the only way to prevent separations in England. William Allen, in his preface to *Scripture Lessons for Schools*, stated categorically that 'this book has God for its Author'.

Yet during these very years the Bible was being challenged on both scientific and moral grounds. Geological research showed that the age of the earth must be considerably greater than was allowed by a Biblical chronology which reckoned the date of Creation as 4004 BC. Human decency rebelled against the ambiguous morality of some Old Testament narratives. By the time the young Charles Darwin took his Cambridge degree he had concluded that 'the Old Testament, from its manifestly false history of the world, . . . and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant', was not to be trusted.<sup>15</sup> Many young people agreed: how *could* God be the Author of a false science and an unworthy morality? It did not help to be told, as young Friends and others were too often told, that their doubts and questionings were 'sinful'.

Twenty years later, in 1859, Charles Darwin's great book *The Origin of Species* was published, and in 1860 a group of Christian scholars made a positive response to it. Writing with courtesy and moderation, they pleaded with their fellow-Christians for more openness to the findings of scientific research, and a less rigid interpretation of the meaning of Biblical authority. Although their book, *Essays and Reviews*, aroused much hostility in the religious press, it was widely read. Among its readers was a thoughtful Manchester Friend named David Duncan, who was impressed by its emphasis on inward authority, on what Friends called the 'inward Light'. Duncan shared his thoughts with puzzled young people in the Manchester Friends Institute; the talk he gave there was published as a pamphlet.

The conflicting attitudes among British Friends were at once brought into the open. The two Quaker monthly papers, *The Friend* and *The British Friend*, took opposite stands. *The Friend* condemned both *Essays and Reviews* and Duncan's pamphlet; *The British Friend* welcomed their 'contribution to freedom of thought and inquiry', and declared that 'the soul of Quakerism' is faith in the 'inward manifestation of Christ' to everyone. The conflict overshadowed the whole Yearly Meeting of 1861.

It was *this* Yearly Meeting, distressed and disturbed as it was, to which the strangers from Calcutta sought admission. Many reacted with fear, fear of some new challenge to scriptural orthodoxy; others felt that the controversies within the Meeting might be 'unedifying' to the newcomers. Only one voice was bold enough to declare that if the letter they had brought proved unorthodox it should be *welcomed*: 'originality of thought would greatly enhance its value'. So the response was ambiguous; as for the Quaker missionary for whom the Indians asked, 'only God, if he so willed, could call one out'.

Russell Jeffrey had made many contacts in India with the organised missions of other churches, and when he returned to England in 1864 he and Hipsley, along with other likeminded Friends, began to urge the Society of Friends similarly to organise a mission, and to send men and women not merely to undertake preaching tours, but to live in the country for extended periods of time. The Yearly Meeting however gave their proposals no united support, because the task of 'turning men's minds to God', to which George Richardson had called the Society five years earlier, still meant crucially different things among Friends themselves. It did *not* mean, said some, to instruct others in an infallible Bible and an unquestioned doctrine; it meant to point them to their own Inward Teacher.

Missionary organisations were nevertheless set up, the Provisional Committee for Foreign Missions in 1864 and the Friends Foreign Mission Association in 1868, but they were autonomous bodies, not part of the Yearly Meeting. Some, but by no means all, of the Friends who settled in India in the '60s and '70s were sponsored by these bodies.



Another Quaker had visited India in 1863, travelling to Calcutta by the same ship as Russell Jeffrey and his party. This was Joseph Pease's grandson Joseph Beaumont Pease. He was a young man of barely 30, but he was already a widower; it may be that the untimely loss of his wife was one of the things that induced him to make the journey when he did. He did not stay in Calcutta, he went off at once to Raniganj, then a major coaling-port for the Ganges river-steamers.

Beaumont Pease was an adventurous young man who was eager to see the world, and especially the wilder and less-known parts of it. He was also a Quaker business-man, with an eye to possible profitable outlets for family business; his sister had married a distant cousin, Henry Fell Pease, whose many business interests included coke. He was also a member of an affectionate closeknit Quaker family. His surviving letters from India<sup>16</sup> cover an attractive medley of themes. There are reports on his endeavours to promote the use of coke for, among other things, fuelling river steamers; there are brotherly, humorous inquiries into his sister's doings and the progress of her babies; there is a great zest for new experience. Rough camping in Kashmir was a high-light of his trip, and it was with keen regret that he gave up the idea of returning to England by the difficult but fascinating desert route.

In fact, like a number of his Quaker contemporaries, Beaumont Pease was a man with a wide range of 'secular' interests. His grandfather had been a noble Quaker humanitarian; his fellow-travellers to India had a deep concern 'to return men's minds to God'. He regarded their work with a friendly eye, but he himself was the forerunner of a third group of Friends, the first of whom began to settle in India soon after he had left. During the following years lively-minded young Friends, with his own zestful readiness for new experience, worked alongside Indian colleagues in varied and important enterprises. Pease however did not live to see it. Before he was 40, taking a long tramp around the Isle of Wight, he contracted a chill which brought on a fatal attack of pneumonia.

### Notes to Chapter V

- 1 See S.Wenger, *The Lalbazaar Baptist Church: a centenary history*. [Not found.]
- 2 Saunderson Walker's *Journal* is preserved in Friends House Library, London.
- 3 *Acts of the Apostles* 10, 33.

4 Macaulay read insatiably during his voyage to India in 1834. See the astonishing list in chapter 6 of *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, ed. G.O.Trevelyan, 2nd ed. 1877, vol.1 p.375.

5 J.J.Gurney, *Memoirs*, 1854, vol.2 pp.537-8.

6 He heard of the Sauds from a correspondent in Calcutta, W.H.Trant, in 1819. See J.J.Gurney, *Observations on the Religious Peculiarities of the Society of Friends*, 1824, pp.10-12n.

7 Some Luso-Indian names are identical with names in the records of the Calcutta Benevolent Institution.

8 See *Autobiography of Devendranath Tagore*, tr. S.Tagore and I.Devi, 1914, p.17.

9 In *The Friend* for April 1864, however, Jeffrey reports that in Vellore they rather conspicuously declined to join in the communion service. 'Our non-use of Baptism and the Supper almost gives offence to some of our missionary brethren, and I believe our quietly bearing a testimony to the non-necessity of these rites ... is of use' (p.78).

10 One of these young men joined the Presbyterian Church, and lived to meet other Quakers in Calcutta in 1919-20.

11 Information can be extracted from contemporary Calcutta directories. In 1863 Mariano D'Ortez' salary was Rs.60/- a month. That was good pay.

12 George Fox, *Epistles* no.144.

13 Letter to Joseph Sturge, 1831.

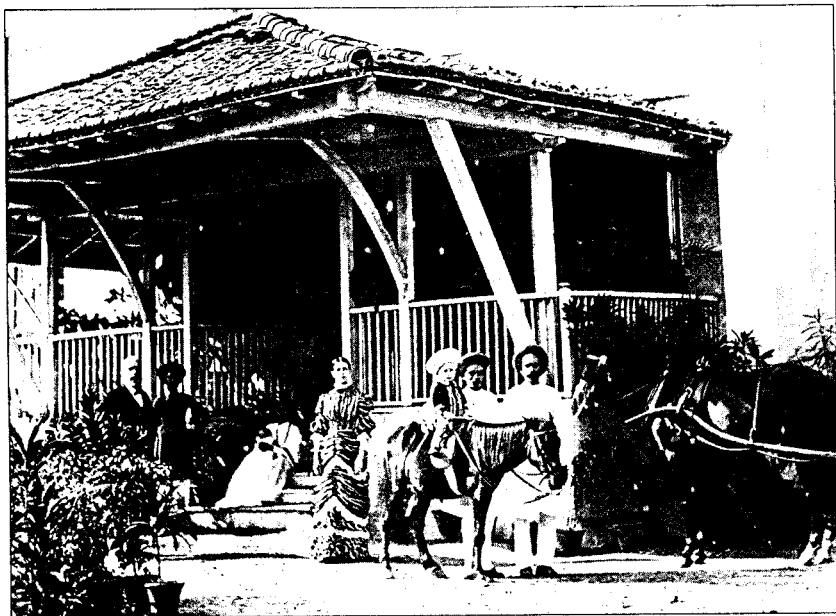
14 Report of a conversation with John Bright in Allen Jay, *Autobiography*, 1910, p.262.

14a T.W.Reid, *Life of William Edward Forster*, 1888, vol.1 p.255.

15 Charles Darwin, *Autobiography*, ed. Nora Barlow, 1958, p.85. He refers to the period 1836-39.

16 Letters in the Durham County Record Office; talk on Kashmir given in 1866 to the Darlington Essay Society.





Thomas Lidbetter (extreme left, behind potted plants) and family and household servants, Bombay, 1886.

Indian interests; soon after Martin joined it published an article about 'Hindu Christians', who were living by the precepts of Jesus within their native religious community, as Rammohun Roy and his successor Keshab Chandra Sen urged people to do. Martin himself had now a personal link with India, for his old Sheffield friend James Wilson had left the cutlery trade for journalism and become editor of *The Indian Daily News* in Calcutta. Martin was ready for a similar adventure in Bombay, and a Sheffield Friend of his own age, Lydia Milner, agreed to follow him there and become his second wife.

Lydia provided another link. She had been at school at Ackworth with a boy named Thomas Lidbetter, who when he left school had insisted on going to sea, and had become a master mariner. In 1853 he had visited Bombay and then Calcutta as captain of a cargo-ship, the *Swarthmore*, and had taken on Indian seamen there for whose services he was to be very grateful, for when the ship reached Australia its English crew deserted to try their fortunes in the gold rush. The return voyage, carrying £300,000 in gold, was a remarkable feat of seamanship, as the ship's design was faulty and serious leaks developed, occasioning three weeks' hard pumping and much exhaustion of crew and officers. By 1860, with much practical

experience of ships behind him, Lidbetter had become a shipbuilder, and was engaged to build the Indus River Steam Flotilla in Karachi. When the work was completed he stayed on, in shipping insurance business. Then came financial crisis; the end of the American Civil War meant the collapse of the inflated Indian cotton market and the ruin of his business, with many others. In 1866 he brought his family to Bombay, where he obtained salaried employment in the same field and where the Woods gave them a warm welcome.

Martin Wood, in *The Times of India*, dealt with the financial crisis with steady commonsense, and soon got to know leaders of Indian public opinion such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahomed Ali Rogay and Phirozeshah Mehta. He was much aware of the public indignation at the government's 'criminal lethargy' in dealing with famine in Orissa in 1866; his articles voiced the widespread criticism of the priority given to railway building rather than the dependable water-supply which the public needed. 'English engineers and surveyors,' he wrote, 'plan expensive railways, for which the masses pay, in a country whose first want is water.'<sup>4</sup>

'The masses pay' – and they had no say 'in how their money is spent.' Wood, who had known the artisans of Sheffield, had a great respect for the common people's ability to judge wisely of matters which affected their lives. 'The natives of India,' he wrote, 'are as clear-brained as our own race.' They are entitled to be asked what *they* want, and to be given the information which is essential to intelligent discussion, and to have some say in the decision-making.

In his criticism of the 'pride and haste' of railway building, Wood could and did point to the warnings of Sir Arthur Cotton ('the greatest engineer who ever entered the public service in India'), who warned the authorities of the damage done to river systems and natural drainage by railways built without adequate survey. He himself was the author of wise schemes of water conservation which John Bright had drawn to the attention of Parliament in 1853.<sup>4A</sup>

Wood, who owed so much to Bright, also took up in *The Times of India* the political themes which Bright had so often raised. Was not the 'listless heavy heedlessness' of British bureaucracy 'far more terrible in practice' than the sporadic acts of tyranny of which some Indian princes might be guilty? When accused of 'meddling with politics' he made a vigorous reply: 'That reproach has usually been flung at those who attempt to get justice done by a powerful class or country towards its dependents – in this case by England towards India.'

Wood kept in close touch both with Dadabhai Naoroji, to whose wisdom and integrity he paid generous public tribute, and with an English contemporary, Henry Fawcett, who entered Parliament in 1865 and quickly

be well known like Charles Forbes before him) as 'member for India'. Fawcett had been attracted, even as a boy, by Bright's championing of the poor, and had decided that he too would embark on a similar political career. An accident in early manhood, which left him totally blind, did not deflect him from his purpose. As a student at Cambridge in the 1850's he was convinced by Bright's speeches on India that it was part of his public duty to inform himself about Indian affairs; in his first Parliamentary contest his sponsor was Lord Brougham, who 20 years earlier had backed the British India Society. By the time he became 'member for India' he was also Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge.

Fawcett raised in Parliament the question which Wood and his Indian friends were raising in Bombay: why should India, burdened by recurrent famine, be made to pay the so-called 'home charges' which in all fairness should be debited to Britain? He compelled the House to attend to the annual Indian budget in a way it had never done before, and to listen to his own masterly analysis of it. He got a financial committee appointed, and insisted on its hearing Indian evidence. Dadabhai Naoroji, himself an able economist, gave evidence in 1871, and was moved by Fawcett's passion for justice. Fawcett indeed spoke of his motives in words which recall how Bright, more than 20 years earlier, had defended his decision to enter Parliament before his Quaker elders. 'I do,' said Fawcett, 'whatever can be done by one humble individual to render justice to the defenceless and the powerless.'

Naoroji and Fawcett were Wood's near-contemporaries. A younger man with a similar selfless concern for the public welfare was Mahadev Govind Ranade of Pune, who in 1867 founded the *Prarthana Samaj* (Prayer Society) for religious fellowship and social reform. Ranade believed that healthy growth in society must 'spring from one's own essential past', though some stimulus from outside might help to evoke it. Wood, who had no sympathy with England's 'civilising mission', used similar language. 'Civilisation,' he wrote, 'is a spiritual matter, not to be induced from without, but to be evoked from within.' The two men undoubtedly knew one another, but records are too scanty to show whether they became friends at a deeper level. Ranade fed his spirit on the hymns of Tukaram, Wood turned to the English poet-mystics who had been Tukaram's contemporaries. Possibly they did know one another 'in that which is Eternal'. There is a Quakerly ring about one of Ranade's recorded speeches: 'What is needed is a new freedom, responsible to the Voice of God within us, recognising the dignity of nature and destiny.'<sup>5</sup>

After about nine years with *The Times of India* Martin Wood gave up his editorship, but remained in Bombay as a freelance journalist. The contributions of 'our Bombay correspondent' to James Wilson's *Indian Daily News* were probably from his pen, for they have the forthright vigour of

his style. Then in 1878 he started an independent weekly, *The Bombay Review*,<sup>6</sup> which he himself regarded as his best work, and which he used to further his own special concerns.

The first of these derived from Wood's profound respect for the intelligence, goodwill and good sense of India's ordinary people. He was very critical of the government's failure to trust their judgment, shown in its suppression of vernacular newspapers. The only result, Wood declared, was to replace 'good cogent writing in Indian languages by poor writing in bad English'. The government's practice of espionage, he went on 'breeds mistrust'. His friend William Wedderburn of the Bombay Civil Service proposed that rural indebtedness might be dealt with through the village *panchayats*, those 'little republican municipalities' whose value had been recognised by Munro and his friends. Wedderburn's proposals were rejected; in the eyes of the government, *panchayats* were merely 'a crude form of socialism, inconsistent with the principles of our rule'.

Wood's second special concern was the neglect and destruction of India's forest wealth. This was something which Henry Fawcett well understood; during the same years in Britain he was fighting to save Epping Forest and the New Forest from reckless destruction. In India, following the Deccan famine of 1877, a Commission was working on plans to prevent or deal with future calamities. 'The Famine Commission,' wrote Wood, 'should inquire whether or not the plenty of the past has vanished with the forests which are *reservoirs without dams*.' The forests had been pillaged then to provide the millions of sleepers demanded by the ever-expanding railways; but more than 100 years later Wood's words still have a topical ring, and carry a present warning.

By 1881, after 16 years in Bombay, the Woods decided that it was time to return to England. Their friends the Lidbetters had left some years earlier, and their own youngest child, named Arthur Lidbetter in gratitude for this friendship, was already 10 years old. The family settled in London, where the three children went to school, but they did not sever their links with India. A year or two later, in 1884, Henry Fawcett died, still comparatively young and greatly mourned. Martin Wood could not be present at the condolence meeting in Bombay, where Ranade, Wedderburn and others expressed their gratitude and sorrow. But for the next 20 years he continued to work for India in England in the spirit and on the lines that Fawcett had laid down.

### *Benares and beyond 1866-72*

In 1866 another Friend, Rachel Metcalfe, began living in Benares. She was Martin Wood's exact contemporary, born like him in 1828, and her social background was very similar to his. She too came of Yorkshire



*Frances Knox, née Reynolds.*



*Rachel Metcalfe, aged 38.*

farming stock; Metcalfe farmers in Wensleydale had joined the Society of Friends in its earliest days,<sup>7</sup> and Rachel's grandfather had been a farmer in Sedbergh. He may have been 'disowned' for marrying a non-Friend, for her father John Metcalfe was not a birthright Quaker. Like Martin Wood's father he had become a small tradesman – in Macclesfield, Cheshire, where he regularly attended the Friends Meeting. In 1825, wishing to marry a Quaker girl, Mary Kendrew, he applied for membership and was accepted, and in 1826 they were married. Rachel was their second child and eldest daughter; three younger ones, two girls and a boy, also grew to maturity.

Rachel had happy memories of childhood, of sitting in the small quiet Meeting, listening to the trees outside rustling in the wind, feeling that God was 'so good and so near'. She and her next sister went to school in Macclesfield, and her parents (who were less 'strict' than some Friends) encouraged her musical gifts; she became a promising pianist. Her beloved elder brother William was sent to Ackworth School, which catered specially for Friends 'not in affluence'.

In 1840 clouds began to gather. Mary Metcalfe fell ill and became paralysed, and at the same time John Metcalfe's modest business was hard hit, like many others, by the repercussions of the Opium War. Rachel left school to keep house and to care for her ailing mother and for little Sarah Jane who was only three. But she did not give up her music and she did her best to educate herself. In 1842 her younger brother Joseph John, who

had followed William to Ackworth, came home in rebellious mood because his father could no longer afford even the very small fee. Rachel, full of adolescent doubt and speculation, shared his rebelliousness; should she not *resign* from the Society of Friends?

Slowly her mood changed. In 1843 *The British Friend* began publication; she read its articles, religious experience began to be real to her again. Then in 1845 her mother died, the family moved to a cheaper house, and Rachel, now 17, realised that she should begin to earn her keep. Friends suggested that she might be a music teacher, but her newly-recovered religious experience made her reluctant to associate with the 'worldly' families who might employ her. So the precious piano was sold, she left her next sister Eliza in charge of the household, and went to Ackworth to work as a servant, making and repairing the girls' uniforms,

Not long afterwards, in 1847, John Metcalfe too died, and the family home was finally broken up. William had completed an apprenticeship in Manchester and was well settled there; Rachel and Eliza became domestic servants in wealthy Quaker families, and together they arranged for Sarah Jane, now 10 years old, to go to Ackworth School. After a few years in York, Rachel went to Charles and Sarah Fryer near Brighouse, to help care for their six small children; they found her so useful that in 1853, when Charles was appointed Superintendent of the Croydon Friends School,<sup>8</sup> they took her with them to Croydon, where she stayed till the end of 1857, when the last little Fryer entered school and no longer needed her.

The years in Croydon marked a turning-point in Rachel's life. She met there another young woman of Quaker origin, five years older than herself, who had already spent 12 years in India, and in 1855 had returned to Croydon and the Meeting in which she had been brought up. To understand the significance of that encounter another fragmentary story must be told.

In the first years of the 19th century a Friend named Thomas Reynolds was running a bleaching business at Beddington near Croydon. Besides being a successful businessman he was also a Fellow of the Royal Society with a keen interest in natural science. His son Thomas Forbes Reynolds<sup>9</sup> shared his interest in science (though not in business), but in 1822 his chief interest was Frances Daniell, a neighbour's daughter. Her parents were planning a marriage for her, but she preferred her Quaker admirer, and the two young people clinched the matter by eloping to Gretna Green and returning married. The Daniell family forgave the escapade and accepted the *fait accompli*. Not so the Friends. Like so many others, including Joseph Pease's daughter Elizabeth, and John Bright's friend W. E. Forster, Thomas Forbes Reynolds forfeited his membership in the Society for marrying someone who was not a Friend. In practice (again like many others) he

and his wife were regular attenders at the Croydon Meeting for Worship, and identified themselves with it so completely that when the young wife died in 1831 her body was buried in the Friends' burial ground, and the fact that she was not in membership was not even recorded.

Her little daughter Frances Mary, scarcely eight years old, was to remember all her life how Elizabeth Fry (who was related to the Reynolds by marriage) had taken her in her arms at her mother's funeral and comforted her. Her bereaved father sent her to 'an excellent girls' boarding school',<sup>10</sup> and himself found a new interest in scientific studies at Cambridge. There he met and befriended a penniless young man, George Knox, who was preparing for Holy Orders. Later, in 1838, the East India Company appointed Knox to a chaplaincy, and before sailing he went to Croydon to say goodbye to his friend. There he met the 15-year-old Frances in her father's house.

Frances, whose unworldly father was unable to provide her with the usual dowry, then proposed to use her own education and earn her living as a governess. Her Daniell grandparents however would not hear of her entering such a *menial* occupation, and their point of view was understandable; F. D. Maurice's Harley Street College had not yet begun to improve the governess' skills and raise her status. 'No,' they said. 'A voyage to India is as good as a dowry. Friends of ours are just going to Madras. You can travel with them; you'll soon find a good husband there!' At first Frances refused; her Quaker standards made her fear 'the worldliness of the society she would meet'. Finally however she agreed, and in 1843 she journeyed to Madras, a girl of 20, slight and beautiful, in her sober, modest Quaker dress.

Madras was captivated by Frances Reynolds' fair beauty, her winning smile, and her quiet Quaker dignity. George Knox the chaplain recognised with delight the girl he had met in Croydon five years earlier, and before many months had passed they were married. It is easy to see why he was attracted. He had had an unhappy childhood, for his mother had died when he was only four, and his father had rejected him harshly and given all his affection to a younger brother. George withdrew into a prickly, defiant independence; in India, poor as he was, he refused to make himself known to his distinguished cousin Sir Henry Lawrence, whose mother was a Knox. Madras thought of him as 'a forceful black Ulsterman' who never smiled – though 'he thought he knew how it was done!' Then came Frances, who had also been a motherless child, and whose young womanhood quickened memories of his own 'loved, long-lost mother'.

One of the chaplain's duties was the oversight of the two Civil Orphan Asylums, one for boys and one for girls, which had been started in Madras by local initiative and were managed by a diocesan committee. The bishop

encouraged Knox's interest in education, and there can be little doubt that Frances, with her leanings towards a teaching career, shared in her husband's work.<sup>11</sup>

In 1848 the Knoxs were transferred to Bangalore, the British 'Residency' town in Indian-ruled Mysore State; a good many 'East Indians' of mixed blood were living there, and their common language was English. There too there were schools. When five years later the chaplain and his family left Bangalore, local newspapers wrote warmly of 'the kindness of heart and courtesy of manner' which had won the hearts of common soldiers and humble civilians alike.<sup>12</sup> The tribute must have been echoed both in Madras and in the newly-established 'sanatorium', Ootacamund in the Nilgiri Hills, to which the Knoxs had been sent. Ootacamund already had a church, which had a free school for the poor to attract Frances' interest.<sup>13</sup>

By the beginning of 1855 Frances Knox had seven children of her own, and George Knox resigned his chaplaincy and took them all to England. Frances was soon back in the familiar surroundings of her childhood, for her husband was appointed curate of Beddington Parish Church and also Association Secretary for the Church Missionary Society in the Croydon area. They found a house at Waddon between Beddington and Croydon, and there Frances created a home which had a profound influence on all her children, for it combined firm Quakerly standards of conduct with tenderness, humour and serene commonsense, and a deep reverence for the things of the spirit.<sup>14</sup>

So in the year 1856 the 32-year-old Frances and the 27-year-old Rachel were both in Croydon. There is no written evidence of their meeting, but every circumstance makes it probable. Would not Frances renew her friendship among the Quakers with whom she had worshipped all her girlhood? Might not Croydon Friends ask her to talk about her experiences in India, at a meeting, where Rachel was present? The two young women had much in common, a simple piety, a great love of children; with Frances social barriers did not count, as her record in India shows. The only written report is Rachel's statement made much later that she had received 'a call of the Lord to India' in 1856, 10 years before she sailed. She said, nothing of how the call had come. Was it not through Frances, in one way or another?

However that may be, Rachel did not feel the call to be an immediate one. When she left Croydon she did no more domestic service, but started her own business as a seamstress, and soon decided to settle in Manchester, where a number of her family were already living. Her brother William was there with his wife and children, so were her Quaker cousins the Kendrews; Sarah Jane had long completed her schooling and was

working there too. The whole family must have shared the excitement of the controversy over *Essays and Reviews* which was then raging round the Friends Institute; they probably also shared the outlook of *The British Friend*, which they read regularly. As for Rachel, she found so much satisfaction in her work, and in the company of William's children who loved her dearly, that she began to wonder whether after all she had been mistaken about that 'call to India'. Then one night, waking suddenly, she heard it again, as a Voice in the silence; she waited expectantly for 'the way to open'.

In October 1864 *The British Friend* published a letter which Russell Jeffrey had received from Jane Leupolt, a CMS missionary in Benares whom he had met during his India tour. She appealed to 'wealthy Friends' to provide money to buy sewing and knitting machines, so that she might start an industrial school for needy girls and women. She was not asking for personal service, but Rachel saw in her appeal 'the opening of the way', and wrote to offer herself as a teacher. She also wrote to Russell Jeffrey, explaining that her call was not, like his, to 'travel in the ministry' but to 'dwell among the people, teaching and helping in the daily routines of life'<sup>15</sup> – to do, in fact, what Frances Knox had been doing in her work for needy children in South India. Jeffrey advised her to lay her call before her own Monthly Meeting. She found no sympathy. 'Stay at home and mind your business,' they told her, and did not even trouble to minute the matter.

Rachel however was now sure of her call. Mrs Leupolt had written to welcome her offer, but explained that it would only be possible if *Friends* would sponsor and support her. Rachel therefore wrote direct to the new Provincial Committee for foreign missions. Many of its members regarded her as 'poor and insecure', like those Calcutta Friends whose existence they tacitly ignored. But Thomas Pumphrey of Ackworth and his friend John Ford of York knew Rachel well, so did prominent Friends in the Brighthouse and Manchester areas, who testified to her character and ability.<sup>16</sup> The Committee therefore agreed to accept her 'to assist with female education in Benares', but its 'support' was the minimum which would enable Rachel to help herself. She provided her own personal outfit, she took her own sewing machine; York Friends arranged for her to travel with CMS missionaries who were returning to India from York, and earn part of her passage by caring for their infant daughter on the voyage. She carried one treasured gift, a set of silver teaspoons which may possibly have been a token of Sarah Fryer's gratitude. One compassionate woman, Jane F. Greene, saw her off at Southampton.

Rachel's missionary companions, Townsend and Sarah Storrs, were wise, gentle people who lived very simply among the tribal people of Santal Parganas, on the Bengal-Bihar border. Townsend showed his wisdom by

opposing any economic dependence of Christians on 'the mission'; he would baptise no one who could not support himself. Rachel's own independent spirit responded, and she learned much. They landed together in Calcutta – in *Calcutta*, only three years after Russell Jeffrey had visited the city; possibly Benjamin Hayllar the railway man, who was a member of Rachel's own Monthly Meeting,<sup>17</sup> was still there. Yet no one told Rachel of the Calcutta Friends, though God had 'called her out', and there would have been no social barriers for *her*. A great opportunity was missed; Rachel travelled with the Storrs to their own base, and then on alone to Benares, possibly for her the most difficult part of the whole journey.<sup>18</sup>

Any difficulties however were soon forgotten. Jane Leupolt quickly realised what a treasure she had got. 'She is the right person in the right place,' she wrote. 'She has a happy knack of making herself understood, and throws heart and soul into her work; she has thorough knowledge and a sweet cheerful temper.'<sup>19</sup> Rachel, 'dwelling among' these young women and 'sharing the daily routines of life', was happy too. She quickly made friends with her pupils, who talked with her freely of their hopes and problems. Her interest in 'female education' was not limited to the training of skilled needlewomen; Jane's husband Charles B. Leupolt soon asked her to accompany him when he visited children's schools, and greatly valued her help.

Among the Leupolts' friends were Dr and Mrs Lazarus, Christians of Indian Jewish origin from Calcutta. Along with their own family they were caring for three little English children whose mother had died suddenly, and Rachel was soon making herself useful in that household also. Dr Lazarus had a lively interest in education, and in 1867 an enlightened Indian prince, the Maharajah of Vizianagram, who spent a good deal of time in Benares, approached him for advice; he wished to provide Benares with an independent girls' school.<sup>20</sup> So high was Dr Lazarus' opinion of Rachel's ability that he asked her to consider becoming Principal of the new school. Rachel was attracted but decided that she was not yet ready for such a responsibility.

The attraction of Dr Lazarus' suggestion was that it offered Rachel congenial work independent of the CMS. Happy as she was among her industrial school pupils, she felt ill at ease in the social circles in which the missionaries moved. 'I prefer my own simple mode of dress and living with its fewer cares,' she wrote. After some further reflection, she asked the newly-formed Friends Foreign Mission Association (FFMA) if it would support her in going forward independently 'as way opened'. She also appealed for a married couple to come and share the adventure with her.

A response came, unexpectedly, from the USA, from Elkanah and Irena Beard of Indiana. Elkanah, like Rachel herself, came of farming

stock, and his record of heroic service during the Civil War was well known to London Friends.<sup>21</sup> When the war ended he and Irena had undertaken an even more dangerous task – to live among newly-emancipated Blacks, confronted as they were by murderously resentful Whites, in Mississippi and Louisiana. An offer of service in Benares from such a couple was readily accepted, and after a few months of language study in London the Beards sailed for India.

They landed not in Calcutta but in Bombay, travelled by rail from there to Nagpur, then by horse-drawn mail coach to Jabalpur, and from there by a newly-constructed railway line to Allahabad and Benares. Fresh as they were from the scars of the American Civil War, they were shocked and saddened by the scars of the Indian insurrection of 1857, encountered both on the journey and in Benares itself. Fear and hatred, Elkanah wrote, made British people regard Indians 'as unworthy of kindness and respect'.<sup>22</sup> Added to this was British social snobbery; the missionaries seemed to him to treat Rachel herself 'more as a servant than an equal'.

'The missionaries in Benares,' reported Elkanah, 'want us to go elsewhere, and since becoming acquainted with their way of working, we are quite of the same opinion!' In the autumn of 1869, as soon as the roads had dried out after the rains, he went exploring down the Narmada river valley, westward from Jabalpur, until he reached Hoshangabad. The ancient little town was very attractive, but in those days before the railway had been built down the valley it was also very remote. The three Friends decided that for the time being they would stay in Benares – but in the Indian city, *not* in any 'mission compound'.

From his first arrival Elkanah had made friends among the many students in the city, and now with their help this plan was quickly carried out. A house was found at Prahlad Ghat, overlooking the river, where they 'dwelt among the people' as Rachel had always wished to do. Consequently they were not regarded with the suspicion with which the public regarded conventional 'missions'. The Government of the 1860's was aggressively Christian,<sup>23</sup> and the mixed motives with which missionaries had been admitted in 1813 were still in operation; the government had recently expressed its 'great obligation' to missionaries for making people 'better citizens of the Empire . . . thoroughly loyal to the British Crown'. No wonder that many Indians 'could see no motive but a political one for the vast outlay of money for missionaries'.<sup>24</sup>

Benares, with its ancient Sanskrit learning and its modern 'western' colleges, was a centre of religious thought and inquiry. In that same year 1869 a 'strange pandit' was declaring in beautiful simple Sanskrit that the *Vedas*, the sacred scriptures, do *not* enjoin idolatry.<sup>25</sup> Keshab Chandra Sen, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was a frequent visitor; like Rammohun

Roy before him he urged people to live as disciples of Jesus within their traditional religious communities. 'The grace of God *is* shining in many hearts,' wrote Elkanah. It shone for him in men like these, in the beauty and dignity of Islam, in the simple humble worshippers on the river ghats. There were things in the religions of India which he rejected, but his test was one of inward attitude more than outward observance; idolatry meant 'what is impure in imagination and wicked in practice', salvation meant 'growth in the beauty of holiness'.

The little house at Prahlad Ghat might fairly be called the first Quaker Centre in India. 'Christ was the Head' of that household, its members served Him in their neighbours, its witness was in life more than words. Nevertheless the Friends were not afraid to use words; they spoke openly of what they owed to Jesus, and Elkanah, the chief speaker, made a great impression. Rachel reported what a Hindu priest had said of him: 'This man *must* be sent of God, he is so full of love.' Arabic scholars from Lucknow and Brahmin pilgrims from Bombay all sought him out as a 'brother'; thoughtful mature men and young college students came to him to learn of the spiritual insights of the Gospels. 'How nicely Jesus puts things!' said the boys.

Elkanah gave much time to these boys, who were fascinated by his microscope and his lively comments on the things it revealed. They devoured the American and British papers in his reading-room, and read of the Franco-Prussian War. 'Why do Christians fight so much?' they asked, and Elkanah told them of the American Civil War and Friends' work for reconciliation there. Meanwhile Rachel and Irena found many ways to befriend their immediate neighbours, especially the women and children. They started a school, and soon had as many pupils as they could manage; they held a 'widows' class', and a Sunday School, and a class for beggar boys. Hindu and Muslim neighbours invited them into their homes so often that they could scarcely fit in all the visits.

Elkanah too was sometimes included in these invitations, and in these simple homes became aware of another need. Many of the menfolk could read a little, but not very much; perhaps, thought Elkanah, he could give them something simple to read which might help them and their families in daily living? He planned a series of colourful handbills called *Good Words*; each one carried, in large clear letters, two or three sentences from the Gospels: short parables, some of the Beatitudes, the 'two great commandments', the saying that God seeks to be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth'. There was no commentary, the words were left to speak for themselves. Dr Lazarus, who among his many interests had a printing press, got them printed in both Hindi Nagari and Persian Urdu scripts, and they were popular and widely read.<sup>26</sup>



The 'daily living' which *Good Words* were designed to help was the Friends' chief concern. Elkanah was critical of Christian teaching which over-emphasised a judgment after death. 'People say,' he wrote, 'what a solemn thing to die. But *I* say, what a solemn thing to *live*, a day at a time, for the social, moral and religious development of this people.' The year 1870 brought rich experience of living, but it often had to be done 'a day at a time', for all three Friends had bouts of ill-health; should they not now move away from the difficult climate of Benares? A Rajah 'from west of Allahabad,' whose sons were studying in Benares, had once invited them to come and teach the people of his State<sup>27</sup> – but the time for a response had gone by. Hoshangabad? It still seemed too remote. They decided on Jabalpur, and early in 1871 they rented a house there. Elkanah opened a reading-room and made friends, as in Benares, with students and educated men. Irena and Rachel started two schools, each in a different part of the town. But Irena's health deteriorated so much that before the end of the year the doctor warned Elkanah that to spend another hot season in India might endanger her life. Hopes shattered, the Beards sadly returned home early in 1872, leaving Rachel alone in Jabalpur. 'The long dreary prospect before me,' she wrote, 'does not lessen the assurance that my coming to India was a right thing.'

### *Towards Hoshangabad 1873-78*

In 1872, on his way home from India, Elkanah Beard met the leaders of the FFMA in London, and pointed to Hoshangabad as a possible future centre of Quaker work. Among those who listened to him on that spring day was a young man of 27 named Charles Gayford. Like Beard himself he was a farmer's son; unlike Beard he was not a 'birthright' Friend, but had grown up in the parish church of his village. Then he had become a grocer in the little town of Stansted, where he met Friends, and found in their Meetings for Worship a spiritual home. He was accepted into membership, and his thoughts turned to 'religious service' with the FFMA. The committee, seeking a replacement for the Beards, welcomed his offer; he spent the rest of the year acquiring basic language and medical skills from a retired missionary, and reached India at the beginning of 1873.

By that time the new railway line from Bombay to Allahabad via Jabalpur was in operation. Gayford reached Jabalpur to find that Rachel, during her year of loneliness, had not only carried on the two little schools, she had also continued Elkanah's informal Bible study group. She welcomed him warmly, all the more so because his social background was so much like her own. She felt, as she confided to him later, that his coming was an answer to her prayer, that she might 'be used as a *plank* upon which others might cross to the field of Indian missionary effort'.<sup>28</sup>

There was a CMS missionary in Jabalpur, Walter Champion, who had been absent on leave when the Friends arrived there in 1871. He was troubled, like most missionaries, by the Quaker attitude to water-baptism. Gayford, ex-churchman as he was, understood Champion's feelings, and assured him that he and Rachel would not stay in Jabalpur, but would look for a new base as soon as the monsoon was over. Meanwhile he practised his Hindi and began to make friends. One of these friends was a young Luso-Indian lawyer, Lewis Mendes, who had been the first native of India to earn an LL.D, a Doctorate of Laws.<sup>29</sup> Another Luso-Indian was Headmaster of the CMS High School; he may possibly have been related to a Calcutta Quaker of the same name, De Cruz. There were other educated men in the railway and police services, some of whom had attended the Bible study led by Elkanah and then by Rachel. Along with sensitive spirits like these, Rachel and Gayford began to hold a regular Meeting for Worship.

At the end of October, when the roads had dried out, Gayford set off to look for a new base, speeded on his way by his friend Lewis Mendes.<sup>30</sup> From the Mandla district he followed the Narmada river westward, from close under the Satpura ranges on the south to the foot of the Vindhya hills on the north bank opposite Hoshangabad. He travelled on foot, remembering the robust prescription for health in the tropics given him by his mentor before he left London: 'No beefsteak or brandy, and *plenty* of physical exercise!' He took a servant to help him, and a pony for possible emergencies, and carried a tent, and a supply of simple medicines, in a bullock cart. On the road he met many friendly villagers, and talked with them as farmer to farmer about their growing crops; he slept in the open air, among people of such simple honesty that a whole police 'circle' of 63 villages was manned by *one* Head Constable with seven men. He noted with less pleasure that although the price of wheat had doubled over 20 years 'the weak become weaker, the poor remain poor'.

During the first week of his journey there was a total eclipse of the moon, and the people came in crowds for ceremonial bathing in the river. There Gayford began his 'religious service'. He offered them some of Elkanah Beard's *Good Words*; those who could read took them eagerly, and a group gathered round him under a shady tree. He told them a story from the Gospels, and talked a little about what it might mean in their own daily lives. The people listened, and many lingered or came back for further talk. It was a pattern of teaching which Gayford followed throughout.

For him however at that time learning was more important than teaching. In the course of his journey he occasionally met other Englishmen – a senior Inspector of Police with 'much valuable knowledge'; a Civil Surgeon, 'a Cambridge man with Quaker connections'. Gayford

learned all he could from them, but he learned even more when he reached the 'Barman Ghat'. Here, a few miles from Narsinghpur, there is a large island in the river and an old ferry-crossing which is a famous place of pilgrimage. When Gayford arrived its great annual festival was in progress. He pitched his tent and stayed, among Indian devotees of many kinds.

One of these was a saintly old philosopher, who said to him one Sunday morning: '*Itear* (Sunday) is linked with *preeti* – love and the obedience of love.' There were others, open disciples of Jesus outside the organised church, including two *sannyasis* who were teaching that 'Jesus has opened a new and living way for all.' Very different were the pilgrims, who were engaged in the *parikrama* (circumambulation) of the holy river from source to mouth and back again, willingly observing the strict personal discipline required of them. Different again were the *Vairagya* ascetics, 'fine men with great strength of character'. The use of an image, they told him, was *not* idolatry; it was an aid (which many need) to the worship of the Unseen. Gayford listened to them all; following Beard he did not 'wangle or dispute', but sought points of contact and 'parted from them in peace'.

When the festival was over Gayford left the river for a time and went north to Sagar, then westward to Bhilsa (Vidisha), and so south through the forested hills back to the river, which he crossed by the ferry to Hoshangabad. Among these lovely hills he found great human suffering. The tyranny of village *malguzars* (landlords) could be 'grievous and heavy to an extreme degree'; daily necessities were severely taxed – 'the salt tax is the worst'. There was hunger, and so much sickness that Gayford's tent 'became a consulting-room for three or four hours a day'. He did all he could, but with keen regret that his own medical knowledge was so limited.

Finally he saw much that might be done for education. In some of the villages he passed through were Government schools, 'efficient but amoral – which may have *worse* results than idolatry'. The schools taught children to read, but there was nothing for them to read. What a service it would be to provide simple books, books of immediate interest to the people, covering every facet of their daily lives!

From Hoshangabad a road ran east to Sohagpur, 30 miles away on the new railway line, and from there back to Narsinghpur and Jabalpur, 'Yes,' thought Gayford as he travelled, 'Elkanah was right. Hoshangabad, with its river ferry and its radiating roads, would be a fine centre for Quaker witness to spiritual truth, which should include both healing of the body and enlightenment of the mind.' When he reached Jabalpur again in February 1874 Rachel was delighted to hear his conclusions; ever since Elkanah had journeyed there years earlier, she had longed to go to Hoshangabad.

It was to be more than two years before she was able to go. Not long after Gayford had returned she went down with smallpox. She had good medical attention, but recovery was very slow. News of her illness reached another little Quaker household, that of Bessie Alexander in Agra. Bessie (Elizabeth Rebecca) was the daughter of a wealthy Quaker banker, and soon after Rachel had settled in Benares she too felt led (possibly through Rachel's example) to religious service in India. She needed no support from the FFMA, being well able to pay her own expenses. When she reached India she went first to Benares to consult Rachel, who was 10 years her senior, and then settled in Agra and started a school, a useful unpretentious piece of service. When she heard of Rachel's condition she invited her to stay in Agra for convalescence, and as soon as Rachel was able to travel Gayford escorted her there, where she was well cared for and at ease.

Gayford then returned to Hoshangabad, found a place to live, and rented an open-fronted shop in the bazaar to serve as a reading-room. He made friends with the priests in the riverside temples, the *sadhus* and pilgrims, and the ordinary townsfolk, including the low caste weavers and basketmakers. He called on the Civil Surgeon, Dr Cullen, and accompanied him on a visit to the Government dispensaries further west; they went to Seoni Malwa and Harda, and on to Khandwa, by bullock cart. When the rains were over Gayford took his tent and pony and trekked eastward again to Sohagpur and Narsinghpur and the annual Barman festival, where he was welcomed by those he had met the previous year. After that he went back to Jabalpur and arranged with Walter Champion for the CMS to take over Rachel's two schools.

Rachel herself stayed on in Agra. For a long time her illness left her partially paralysed, and unable to stand without support. Gayford visited as often as he could, and her courage and cheerfulness moved him deeply; he cared for her like a son. One day towards the end of 1874 he brought news which pleased her greatly: he was engaged to be married to Harriet Mendes, the sister of his friend Lewis. Harriet was a teacher in Jabalpur, and Rachel had known her well there. To the FFMA committee in London the news was not so acceptable. They did not approve of marriage with 'a native',<sup>31</sup> but they decided 'not to place any obstacles in the way', and the young couple were married in March 1875.

Now, instead of 'camping' in Hoshangabad as he had been doing, Gayford needed a suitable 'family' house, and could not find one in the town. A house was to be had however in the new 'railway colony' in Sohagpur, so for the time being the Gayfords made their base there. This proved to be the beginning of links between Friends and local railway workers which were maintained for many years. A few months earlier, visiting Khandwa with Dr Cullen, Gayford had had a warm welcome from

the Station Master there, who had earlier attended his Bible readings in Jabalpur. Among the railway employees were others who like him were spiritually lonely, and for their sakes the Gayfords arranged for Sunday evening worship in the station waiting room at Sohagpur. During the week Gayford spent most of his time developing his friendships in Hoshangabad, riding his pony from one town to the other, while Harriet, keen teacher as she was, opened a school for little Indian girls in Sohagpur.

Meanwhile the London committee instructed Gayford to look for land for a base at Hoshangabad, and he soon found it. A farmer of Khojanpur village was ready to sell him about three and a half acres on the riverbank just outside the town; adjacent to it, and also available, was a Government plot of about the same size. In June 1875 Gayford bought them both (for less than 300 rupees all told); actual building however could not begin until the four-month monsoon season was over.

Much happened during those four months. Gayford would sit down on the river ghats and tell stories of Jesus and how his teachings might be practised in daily living. There was a friendly response. 'Yes,' the listeners would say, 'that's true, that's very good!'; and they themselves would turn on the occasional heckler with a brusque 'Shut up, you!' Others sought Gayford out in his bazaar reading-room, among them a Brahmin schoolmaster named Devidayal. Devidayal had been turned out of his village for opposing idolatry, and he openly regarded himself as a Christian. Gayford welcomed him and got him to help with the many young men who also came. These youngsters had learned a little English in the Government Middle School at Hoshangabad, and were attracted by a friendly young Englishman from whom they might learn more. Even during heavy rains Gayford kept up his visits, though sometimes he had to swim his pony across flooded dips in the Sohagpur road.

On one such visit an 18-year-old Brahmin named Bal Mukand Naik<sup>32</sup> came and told Gayford that like Devidayal he wished openly to declare himself a Christian. Gayford questioned him carefully, and felt sure that Bal Mukand was ready for such a step; they planned to hold an open meeting in Hoshangabad, to which Harriet and others might come from Sohagpur and at which Bal Mukand might make his declaration 'in the midst of his own people'. But there was still no house to be had in Hoshangabad, and having made his decision Bal Mukand was eager to carry it out without delay. Early in August therefore he went with Gayford and Devidayal to Sohagpur, where a little group of half a dozen gathered on the verandah of the Gayfords' house. Gayford read the lovely verses of Psalm 103, Bal Mukand's written application to be received into the Society of Friends was read and accepted, and Bal Mukand himself took off the 'sacred thread' of his caste and cut off his *chutiya*, the lock of long

hair which is left by Hindu custom on the crown of the head. The action was a symbolic renunciation of his Brahmin privilege, a declaration that he was now a part of the mass of common humanity.

The same evening Bal Mukand's father followed him to Sohagpur, found him in the bazaar with Gayford and Devidayal, and burst into lamentation: 'How could *you* do such a thing, a good obedient boy like you? You are dead to me now – I am dead myself!' His wailing attracted a crowd, but the *patel* (headman) and the schoolmaster were among them, and they gave Bal Mukand a fair hearing.

It's true [he said]. I am a Christian, a disciple of the Lord Jesus. It is my own free choice; no one offered me any inducements whatever.

The *patel*, who was himself a Brahmin, understood the father's feelings.

All the same [he said to him], I do not think your son has done anything wrong by becoming a Christian. I have talked with the *sahib* and with Panditji (Devidayal); there is nothing but good and truth in their teaching.<sup>33</sup>

By the next day the father felt calmer, and before he returned to Hoshangabad he paid a courteous visit to the Gayfords. It seemed quite possible that Bal Mukand would soon be allowed to go back and live in his own home, for he had broken no caste taboos.<sup>34</sup> However this did not happen, probably because of the hostility of Bal Mukand's step-mother, and the Gayfords arranged for him to go to Allahabad to take the High School course. Harriet had relatives there, and there was a strong, economically independent Christian community.

Both in Sohagpur and in Hoshangabad educated and cultured people were well-disposed towards the Christian group, but among superstitious common people Bal Mukand's action aroused latent fears of 'conversion'. In Sohagpur children were forbidden to go to Harriet's school; they might be 'turned into Christians' there by eating something which a Christian had touched! But the children refused to be kept away; one little girl, finding that her elder sister had hidden her veil to prevent her from going out of the house, threw convention to the winds and ran off to school without it! In Hoshangabad too there was gossip: had Bal Mukand's father been *bribed* to accept his son's action? – and *why* had Gayford bought *land*? Gayford's own openness and good humour quickly allayed the suspicions.

In October 1875, when the rains were over, the Gayfords went to Agra and brought Rachel to Sohagpur, where she happily took charge of Harriet's girls' school, and also began to help little boys with their lessons. It had become clear that her physical disability would be permanent, and Gayford had procured a wheelchair for her from England. As soon as she

was well settled among their railway friends in Sohagpur the Gayfords took their tent, pitched it on the land which Gayford had bought, and set to work to build their own Hoshangabad home. All through that winter, and through the spring and summer of 1876, they lived among the builders on the site, only moving from the tent into a thatched shed during the intense heat of April and May. Before the rains came the house was ready, the work well done; at the beginning of July they moved in.

Site and building were soon tested by a heavy, prolonged monsoon. In September the river rose in a great flood. A little way downstream were two newly-constructed railway bridges, one designed to carry a line from Itarsi to the Holkar state capital at Indore, the other for an Indian Midland Railway route through Bhopal to Agra. The flood swept away the Holkar bridge, which was never re-built, and badly damaged the other,<sup>35</sup> but the new house stood high and dry. 'The whole city and cantonment might be swept away,' said one old man to Gayford at the time, 'but *your* house would be safe!'

So in October 1876 Rachel Metcalfe came to Hoshangabad at last, to this dry, secure house. She was glad to be there, though she always spoke gratefully of the kindness she had received during her year in Sohagpur. But there was one matter about which she felt ill at ease: the house was too far from the homes of the people. She wanted, as she always did, to have a school, and for that she must live 'right among the people' where the children could easily come. Gayford understood, he rented for her a little house in the bazaar, and there the children came to school on weekdays and the little group of Friends met for worship on Sundays.

A few other local people had followed Bal Mukand's example and had been accepted into membership, at public meetings 'in the midst of their own people'. Ali Baksh and his wife Shogra were Muslim; others, including Bal Mukand's school friend Jugal Kishore, were Hindu. 'Two or three hundred respectable Muslims and Hindus' listened to the proceedings with friendliness, and several asked if they too might attend the Friends' meetings for worship. By March 1877 there were a number, Bal Mukand's own father among them, who confessed to being 'Christians at heart', and whose faith, as Bal Mukand said, was 'known in their conduct'.

These new Friends kept their original Muslim or Hindu names and personal customs. When Rachel Metcalfe came to Hoshangabad however, Gayford had appointed a Christian couple from outside the district, David and Dorcas, to maintain the friendly contacts in Sohagpur. In 1878, when Bal Mukand returned home after finishing his High School course, he married their daughter Ruth. By that time there were a dozen adult Friends and some 'attenders'; 20 or more were present at the meetings for worship, and there were 25 children in a Sunday school. 'It is the desire of our

hearts,' wrote Gayford, 'that all may become branches of the Living Vine, known by their fruits as disciples of the Lord Jesus.' They formed a Monthly Meeting for church affairs; Gayford prepared a Hindi translation of London Yearly Meeting's *Advices and Queries*. It was received with enthusiasm, and Bal Mukand at once suggested that the *Queries* should be printed on cards, 'in large letters, with a nice border, so that we can hang them up in our houses'.

In other ways 1877 was a difficult year. It was the year of the Deccan famine, and starving people from the stricken Maratha districts to the south drifted even to Hoshangabad. Just then the Friends received an unexpected gift from Quaker children in Philadelphia, and decided to set aside a substantial part of this as an 'orphanage fund'. The FFMA objected; an orphanage, they said, was *not* part of their work. The Monthly Meeting replied with spirit: 'An orphanage must of necessity be part of our work in future. What could be a more appropriate use of a children's gift than for other needy children? As for the rest, we shall raise the money locally.' A few years were to show that their forecast was correct.

There were other disputes with the London committee. The work in Sohagpur had to be closed, and David and Dorcas withdrawn, because the FFMA would not allow it to be carried on 'under *native* management'. Only after long argument, and grudgingly, did the committee sanction the cost of a basic need, a well for the Gayfords' new house. They reprimanded Gayford for buying another house in the bazaar without previous approval; it was a bargain at 50 rupees, and would have been lost by delay. It served for years to house a fine piece of work, the Balaganj boys' school. The FFMA, in short, refused to trust the judgment of workers on the spot; most disappointing of all it ignored Gayford's repeated appeals for a medically qualified colleague.

Soon after Gayford reached Hoshangabad he had met a revered Hindu teacher, Pandit Govind Ram, who became a close friend. 'Your mission is of God,' the Pandit would say. 'Life *should* be lived as Jesus taught. But don't create a separate Christian 'caste'. Let the spirit of Christ transform Indian society from within.' Other thoughtful men had said much the same, and the challenge of their words was repeated in an unforgettable way when Gayford went to Agra in October 1875. Then, with Harriet to help to care for Rachel, he had been able to visit the Taj Mahal. Its inspired loveliness moved him deeply – how great was the spirit that had conceived and created it! Could not the Truth of the Gospel be shared with this gifted people *without* creating a separate Christian caste? The friendly response to the public meetings of Quaker testimony at Hoshangabad made him feel that perhaps it could.

Early in 1877 news came that the Beards, health restored, were hoping to return to India. Gayford rejoiced. Might not Elkanah realise in Hoshangabad his dream of a Friends High School, and perhaps also a Normal School for women teachers such as Rachel and Harriet both desired? In May, however, the FFMA decided not to re-appoint this mature and dedicated couple, apparently because they regarded the Beards as 'unsound' in what they considered 'necessary beliefs'.<sup>36</sup> Gayford, who had so much in common with Elkanah, felt a new insecurity. Letters were coming from London asking on what 'grounds' people were admitted into Quaker membership in Hoshangabad. Would they too be considered 'unsound'?

By the end of 1877 Gayford had been in India for nearly five years, carrying much responsibility almost alone. Tired and ill, he consulted a doctor in Bombay who advised a change of climate. He therefore asked the FFMA for home leave in the spring of 1878, but perhaps did not make it clear that he did so on medical advice. Leave was refused; he was told that he could not 'leave his post' till the end of 1878, when 'reinforcements' would be sent to 'relieve' him.<sup>37</sup> Now that the mission held property, he could no longer 'pull up his tent-pegs' and move on, as (like Rachel and the Beards) he had so often done before. He and Harriet agreed to stay, but he told the FFMA that when he was 'relieved' he would resign from their staff, and take a full medical course, in order to give India that service for which he had so often pleaded in vain. When the Gayfords reached England in the spring of 1879 that is what he did.

It is clear that the FFMA was not wholly at ease with those whom it sent to India during its first 10 years. Rachel had been accepted, rather unwillingly, because of her own persistence; the Beards, because of their anti-slavery record, Gayford because they needed a man so urgently. All four had their roots in the farming communities and little market towns where the 'conservative' Quaker outlook prevailed. The leaders of the FFMA, like Russell Jeffrey, were drawn from the network of wealthy Quaker families who shared the 'orthodox' emphasis on doctrine. From 1869 onwards the divergencies of approach had become steadily clearer.

Neither Beard nor Gayford had any faith in the 'christianising' influence of British rule, which seemed to them merely to encourage selfish materialism. 'You British!' an Indian religious leader once exploded to Gayford. 'You bring your railways and your telegraphs, you explore with your telescopes the secrets of the three worlds – and you make our people *more* worldly, *more* covetous, *more* mercenary than they ever were before!'

At another level, Beard and Gayford both rejoiced in the grace of God manifest in Hindu or Muslim forms; the leaders of the FFMA did not believe that the Holy Spirit might inspire those who did not accept 'necessary beliefs', and they criticised Beard's *Good Words* because they did not mention any such doctrines. In 1870 they told Beard that if he met with so little opposition from 'the heathen' he couldn't be doing much good! – and the same criticism might have been levelled at Gayford. It probably did not help when Beard replied whimsically that he had had plenty of opposition, from the *missionaries*, or when Gayford, at a public meeting in London in 1879, spoke with vivid appreciation of India's native civilisation, and the culture and intelligence of her village farming folk.

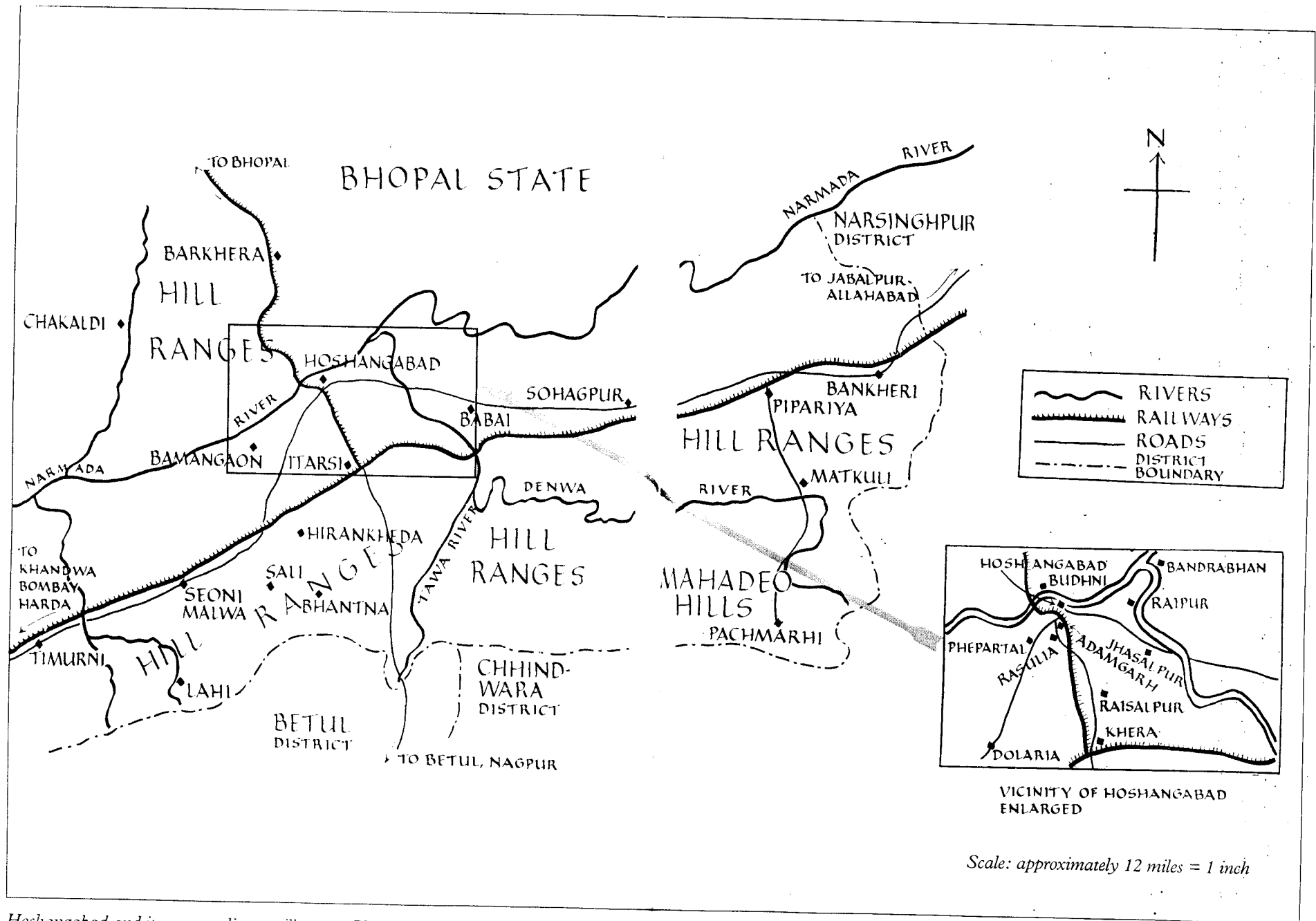
## Notes to Chapter VI

- 1 G.C. Moore Smith, *The Story of the People's College, Sheffield*, 1912; also James Wilson, letter to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1st March 1898.
- 2 M. Barns, *The Indian Press: A History*, 1940, p.270.
- 3 There was another Quaker couple in Karachi at the time, Henry and Elizabeth Jacob. Their occupation is not known. They left about 1863.
- 4 This and subsequent quotations are from Martin Wood's editorials in *The Times of India*.
- 4a John Bright, *Speeches*, ed. J.E. Thorold Rogers, 2nd ed. 1869, vol.1 pp.16-17, 3rd June 1853. See also *Public Addresses by John Bright*, ed. J.E. Thorold Rogers, 1879, pp.404-6, 13th September 1877.
- 5 Address to a conference of social workers, Allahabad 1892.
- 6 A file of the *Bombay Review*, 1878-81, is in the Central Library, Bombay.
- 7 The ancestors of Sir Charles Metcalfe of India came from the same region of north-west Yorkshire. The account of Rachel Metcalfe's own childhood is derived from an 'autobiography' edited from her letters and published as an FFMA Jubilee booklet in 1916.
- 8 Charles Fryer was a business man, not a teacher, but for Superintendent it was thought important to choose a Friend in good standing.
- 9 I have not been able to discover whether the name Forbes indicates any link with Charles Forbes' family.
- 10 A number of such schools, conducted by Friends, were in existence. One was at Isleworth, not far from Croydon.
- 11 There is no written evidence. Wives were ignored in official reports.
- 12 Quoted in *The Church in Madras*, by F. Penny, vol.3, 1922, p.332.
- 13 The Ootacamund of this period is described in Richard Burton, *Goa and the Blue Mountains*, 1851, pp.270-333.

- 14 See *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, 1930, by Frances' son Edmund Knox, born in India 1847.
- 15 Letter to Russell Jeffrey, October 1864.
- 16 While Rachel worked in Yorkshire (1847-53) she was chosen several times as one of the women representatives to the Monthly Meeting.
- 17 Benjamin Hayllar's membership was transferred from Leeds to Hardshaw East (Manchester area) in 1857.
- 18 The citizens of Aligarh, led by Syed Ahmed Khan, had recently complained that both European and Indian ladies might be exposed to insulting behaviour from 'lowgrade European railway servants' who travelled free in the second class.
- 19 Letters from the Leupolts in the archives of the Church Missionary Society (in the University Library, Birmingham) contain several references to Rachel's work.
- 20 Another account credits 'the Rajah of Benares' with this scheme. That is unlikely; in social and religious matters he is known to have been conservative.
- 21 Elkanah is said to have been the only man in the country who could cross the fighting lines, unarmed and unhindered, on his errands of mercy to sufferers on both sides.
- 22 These and subsequent quotations are from Elkanah Beard's letters preserved in Friends House Library, London.
- 23 *The Times* (London) warned the Viceroy Sir John Lawrence of the danger of 'too much haste to encourage the propagation of Christianity'.
- 24 J. Routledge, *English Rule and Native Opinion in India*, 1878, p. 176. The author had visited the Friends in Benares and noted their different approach.
- 25 Described in a letter in the archives of the Council for World Mission.
- 26 A few specimens are preserved in Friends House Library, London.
- 27 The area west of Allahabad, between there and Jhansi, is Bundelkhand; the territory was divided between a number of Indian-ruled states of various sizes.
- 28 Reported in a letter from Gayford, January 1875.
- 29 He is therefore referred to, correctly, as Dr Mendes, but was not a Doctor of Medicine as has sometimes been assumed.
- 30 Gayford's descriptions of this journey were published in the *Friends' Monthly Record*, London, in 1874-5.
- 31 Among the British officials of previous generations who held the traditionalist point of view, a number married Indian wives.
- 32 The name Mukand has been queried by some scholars who say it should be Mukund, a common Hindu name. Mukand, however, occurs locally in the Narmada valley, probably derived from a local legendary hero Mrikandu. Bal Mukand, himself a Sanskrit scholar, presumably knew how to spell his own name.
- 33 This account of the course of events is based on a letter from Gayford, written less than a week after they occurred, and published in *The Friend*, London, October 1875.
- 34 Ramachandra, a teacher in the Delhi College who became a Christian in the 1840s, was readmitted to his Kayasth caste, and in the 1870s was virtually the

- head of the *biradri*, the caste brotherhood. See James P. Alter and Herbert Jai Singh, 'The Church in Delhi', in *The Church as Christian Community*, ed. Victor E. W. Hayward, 1966, pp. 24-25.
- 35 The story may still be read in the old foundations visible when the river is low. The Midland bridge was re-designed, raised and strengthened, and has stood firm through many floods since.
- 36 The minute of May 1877 gives no reason, but reflects a certain embarrassment: 'Under the circumstances, with deep sympathy with our dear friends under the feelings which Elkanah Beard has in great humility expressed, we cannot recommend any steps at present towards securing their valuable services.'
- 37 These military metaphors were common in the missionary vocabulary of the time.





*Hoshangabad and its surroundings to illustrate Chapter VII et seq., based on a sketch-map by Marjorie Sykes.*

## CHAPTER VII

## Quaker Missionaries

*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them . . .*

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW 28 : 19

THE MEMBERS of the FFMA committee, who in 1877 refused to send the Beards back to India, committed themselves in that very same meeting to missionary work in the accepted sense of the term. They interviewed a young man named Samuel Baker, who belonged to their own social circle and used their own religious language. He was a Dublin Friend, educated at the Quaker schools, Waterford and Bootham; after leaving school he had helped his widowed mother with the family business. At the same time, influenced by D. L. Moody's revivalist campaign in 1873-4, he had thrown himself into the work of the Friends' 'House Mission' in the slums of Dublin. The committee 'felt no hesitation' in accepting him 'for service as a missionary in India', and at once arranged for him to have language study and basic medical training in preparation for his work.

In 1877 however Baker was barely 21 years old, and some of the committee members insisted that he should have an older and more experienced fellow-worker. The secretary, Henry Stanley Newman, set to work to find one. One of his own business enterprises was a printing press, intended to teach needy orphan boys a useful trade. Their instructor was John Williams, a Scot in his mid-30's, who had formerly been an Army printer in India. At Newman's suggestion, he and his wife agreed to accompany Baker to Hoshangabad. They were not Friends, but before they left England they were received into the Society. The party sailed in November 1878, with a great public send-off such as none of their predecessors had ever been accorded. For the FFMA it was a new start.

In the last days of 1878 Charles and Harriet Gayford welcomed the newcomers to Hoshangabad, handed over charge, and left for Calcutta on their way to England. Baker was delighted with the airy, well-built

house; he settled into one wing of it, leaving the rest to John and Effie Williams and their two little boys. Rachel Metcalfe gave them a warm welcome, for the Williams were people of her own kind, and she took much pleasure in their children.

The 'new start' nevertheless was not entirely happy. John Williams, pressed into service at short notice, had not had the ample opportunity for language study which Baker had enjoyed. Moreover neither Newman, nor Baker regarded him as a genuinely equal partner. Before the party left England Newman appointed Baker as secretary of the local Hoshangabad committee, and told him that he was to take the lead – but did not feel it necessary to explain this to his employee Williams. Williams naturally felt hurt and humiliated when Baker took all directly 'religious service' into his own hands, and gave the older man only the necessary but secondary tasks of keeping accounts and caring for animals and buildings. And Baker at first did not realise the harm he had done.



*Samuel Baker*

Nevertheless, Samuel Baker had a generous spirit and a warm heart. He also had a quick Irish temper, which in his impetuous youth sometimes flared into uncontrolled violence of speech and action, followed by bitter remorse and self-reproach. At such times Effie Williams, with her quiet unassuming goodness, became his confidante. She had soon heard all about Samuel's girl-cousin Anna O'Brien; he had loved her, he said, ever since he was eight years old, and at last she had agreed to marry him. He heard, in his turn, that Newman had never told Williams of his instructions about the mission; on a generous impulse he wrote to London, proposing that he himself should return and be married in Ireland, leaving Williams in charge in Hoshangabad. The London committee vetoed this proposal, but for a time Baker and Williams drew closer, and Baker shared the grief when the Williams' newborn infant daughter and their younger son both died within a few sad weeks.

In the first days of 1879 however Baker's attitude can only be called arrogant. Letters to the London committee include unkind comments about both Williams and Rachel Metcalfe, and the amazing charge that

Charles Gayford 'had done no work since his marriage'. Baker seems to have regarded himself as the 'saviour' of the mission, and before he had been a month in the country he had rebuked the little Quaker group for 'observing caste'. It is not clear what this means – possibly merely that each family had kept its original life-style and food habits. What is clear is that Ali Baksh and Bal Mukand, the Muslim and the Brahmin, were working happily together, and that Bal Mukand was making friends with outcaste *chamars* (leather workers) and telling his own jeering caste-fellows, with a cheerful grin, that 'God and all humanity belong to the same caste!'

Baker's own plans included much building, proposals for which were sent to London before the end of that same month. The proposals included a Meeting House capable of seating 250 people, and a house for Rachel Metcalfe adjacent to it, in the Jumerati area on the fringe of the town, also a new school building on the site Gayford had bought for the school in Balaganj. This programme was at once approved, and Williams began work on the Meeting House. It was opened at a public meeting in November 1880, and Newman who visited Hoshangabad a few weeks later commented that 'it added very considerably to the position of the mission among the people of the town'. It is impossible to say whether that was really so, but perhaps Baker himself did regard it as a 'status symbol' for what he called 'the Englishman's religion'.

'The Englishman's religion' was proclaimed by regular lectures and open-air preaching in the town, and by wide-ranging preaching tours in the District. At first, until Baker himself became more fluent in spoken Hindi, Bal Mukand and Ali Baksh did most of the public speaking, while Pandit Dayal Masih (Din Dayal) took charge of the Balaganj School. These three men, who had been Gayford's friends and fellow-workers, supported Baker loyally, for although this strenuously organised propaganda was so different from Gayford's leisured personal approach, they seem to have recognised behind it the genuine religious experience of which at this time he wrote to his fiancée: 'The great thing is looking unto Jesus . . . we are saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.'<sup>1</sup>

But the differences between Gayford and Baker were very great. Baker insisted that converts should not only 'look unto Jesus' but accept the 'necessary beliefs' about him. Those who applied for membership in the Meeting were required to make a written confession of faith in 'the Deity of the Lord Jesus as only Saviour, his death as the atonement for our sin . . .'. This was close to a credal statement; Sunday school children were taught a catechism on the same lines. Gayford had based the Meeting for Worship on the silent expectant waiting on God which he had known in his rural Meeting in England; Baker made it a programmed meeting

like those he had once led in the Home Mission in Dublin. Some people did not like the change, and became 'unwilling' to attend worship. Rachel Metcalfe felt uneasy; she feared that 'notions' and 'long sounding sermons' might take precedence over 'the love and truth of Jesus . . . in life and action'. 'It is the *life* that tells,' she wrote. 'Not *saying*, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but *putting on Christ*.' In Baker's eyes however Rachel was old-fashioned – she had even objected to his use in mission reports of the 'heathen' names of the days of the week!

Baker's attitude to Indian religious practice was also very different from Gayford's. He did not seek to understand it, much less to learn from it. He remained complacently ignorant of serious Hindu thought on the symbolism of image-worship and ritual. 'The people's ignorance and wickedness is appalling,' he wrote. 'They "bow down to wood and stone", and even bathing is considered an act of worship, which is rather ludicrous.' Islam fared no better. 'God is *one*, and *dwells in our hearts*', said earnest Muslims; but Baker heard in this no echo of Quaker experience, only the stubborn refusal to accept a 'Trinity' or worship 'the Son of God'. Moreover he understood nothing of the network of mutual support and mutual obligation which, for Hindu and Muslim alike, bound Indian society together. He had the individualist outlook characteristic of the Victorian business man, and in religious terms that meant that he thought of 'salvation' as an affair of the individual alone. He was bewildered that appeals on these lines should meet with so little response. 'People seem unable to understand,' he wrote, 'the advantages to be gained by leaving their own religion and becoming Christians.'

Anna O'Brien married Samuel Baker in Bombay at the end of 1881. In preparation for her coming John Williams built a new mission house at Sohagpur, and he and Effie went to live there and take up the threads of friendship which had had to be abandoned when Rachel had moved to Hoshangabad in 1876. The newly-married couple had the Hoshangabad house to themselves. Anna had moved in 'good society' in Belfast, and was eager to be accepted in similar British social circles in India, in what was then known as 'Anglo-Indian' society. She brought with her the appropriate household and personal equipment. The upkeep of such a household required a considerable number of servants – though not many more than well-to-do Friends in England then employed. Baker himself had two personal servants, a valet and a *syce* (groom) for his horse.

Anna's social ambitions tended to widen the gap between the Bakers and their humbler missionary colleagues. She refused to meet the Williams' Eurasian friends in the railway colony at Sohagpur, and she persuaded Samuel that he and she should join the Hoshangabad English Club, where neither the Gayfords, the Williams, nor Rachel would have

been accepted. Samuel was at first reluctant; he was critical of many aspects of official society, and especially of the 'profound reverence' of behaviour exacted from Indians. 'We are the conquering race,' he wrote scornfully, 'to be looked upon as a kind of superior being! – and our countrymen love to have it so.' Missionaries, he went on, should *not* be too much of gentlemen! 'I have a great dread of appearing too grand . . . we need to take off our coats and roll up our sleeves and regularly go in!'

Marriage and the English Club put an end to such dreams of manual labour. Anna would not have thought it 'proper', and he could not well argue the point because of his own poor physical health; he had had intermittent bouts of 'low fever' even during his first weeks in India. Club society influenced him in other ways. In 1883 the political storm over Lord Ripon's Ilbert Bill shook even remote Hoshangabad. By then a number of able well-qualified Indians held responsible administrative posts, but as the law then stood an *Indian* magistrate or judge had no power to deal with a criminal suit involving an *Englishman*. The Ilbert Bill was designed to correct this anomaly, and it had the approval both of the Viceroy's Council and the Secretary of State in London, but it raised a fury of racial arrogance among the British in India. Baker, who two years earlier had commented so scathingly on British arrogance, now reacted differently. 'Popular government,' he wrote, 'is not suited to a conquered country with millions of people ready to shoot or stab us at the first opportunity.' There speaks the voice of an English Club in which the scars of the 'Mutiny' were still evident. The issue was *not* 'popular government', it was racial discrimination within the Indian Civil Service.

In 1881 Bal Mukand's father, 'Christian at heart' as he was, brought to Rachel Metcalfe an orphan girl named Bhuriya Yesodha, and asked that she might be brought up under Christian care. Rachel hesitated, because of her own increasing physical helplessness; but Samuel Baker promised to give her the practical support she needed, and she finally agreed. Other needy ones quickly followed, and Rachel's new home near the Meeting House soon sheltered a 'family' of girls and babies. Bal Mukand and his wife took in a Maratha boy-waif named Madhu Rao, and got support for him locally. Other boys were brought to the Bakers. Anna happily took charge of them; she had enjoyed the 'ragamuffins' in her slum Sunday School in Belfast, and she enjoyed her Hoshangabad 'family' in the same way. She and Rachel began to enliven the pages of the mission reports with vivid pen-pictures of the children and their pranks. Bhuriya Yesodha was growing up; together with an old woman named Appamani she helped to care for the little ones.

'They have a pet called Mitthu [Rachel wrote]. He is a green parrot, and he calls them all by their names. He can laugh and cry so



*Rachel Metcalfe and Anna Baker, with orphans.*

realistically that I sometimes ask why Janab is crying, only to be told merrily: 'It's not Janab, it's Mitthu!'

By 1883, in fact, circumstances were compelling Hoshangabad Friends to take up the work which they had foreseen in 1877. The FFMA however still declared that the care of orphans was not part of its work, so that money to support the children had to be raised privately. In 1877 Hoshangabad Friends had felt confident that it could be found locally (as Bal Mukand *had* found it) but during the six or seven years which had elapsed the mental climate had changed; no longer were there such close and easy relationships with the general public.

The change was largely due to the policies which Baker, with the backing of the FFMA, had pursued. The aim was to make converts, and converts were accepted only if they 'broke caste' and severed their links with their former religious community. On the other hand, Friends could not offer these men and women any stable religious community to take the place of the old, because of their ambiguous attitude to the practices of their fellow-Christians, especially the rite of baptism. The FFMA had stated its desire that converts should become 'not a narrow sect but part of the Christian church', but without baptism the Christian church would not have them. Nothing could be more confused than Baker's own statement: 'I do not mind whether they (the converts) become Friends

or not. On principle no baptism, no Lord's Supper – but I am no sectarian.'!!

The result was that the tiny group in Hoshangabad *was* in practice a narrow and extremely vulnerable 'sect', isolated from the great Hindu and Muslim communities on the one hand and from their fellow-Christians on the other. Many found the isolation intolerable; some returned to the community of their birth, others (like Bal Mukand's friend Bal Kishore) were baptised into the larger Christian community. Those who remained were almost all in mission pay, as teachers, as catechists, or as domestic servants in missionary households. Baker urged that they should 'give up the comforts of town life, earn their own living by manual labour, and preach in their spare time'. He did so sincerely, it was his own old ideal, yet he himself, by action and example, made its realisation impossible. They saw *his* preaching supported by 'the mission' – why not theirs? He did not give up town life, or earn his livelihood by manual labour; neither did the Christians in Jabalpur and elsewhere with whom they intermarried.<sup>2</sup> But they did not discuss these things with Baker; he, the missionary, was the paymaster, and natural human intercourse was very difficult.

There was another factor: during these early years of his service Baker's policy had discouraged independent local initiative. The little group of 1879 had not been consulted about building the Meeting House; it was provided for them, out of foreign funds, on a scale far beyond their own immediate needs. A few years later, when the question of support for orphans arose, there is no hint that any local appeal was even considered. By the spring of 1885, when the Bakers took a long leave in England and Ireland, only one of the three independent-minded Indian workers who had been Gayford's friends remained. Bal Mukand was still there, but he was chafing. He and Samuel Baker were of almost the same age; he was the younger in years by only a few months, and in knowledge of Indian ways and Indian thought he was much the senior. Yet Baker was apt to command rather than consult, and there are hints that Bal Mukand felt himself being treated 'more as a servant than an equal' – as Beard had seen Rachel treated, years before, in Benares.

During all these years Gayford had been a medical student in London, and in 1885 in his 40th year became a qualified doctor. He had kept up, throughout, an affectionate correspondence with Rachel, and had urged on the FFMA the need for her to have companionship and help. In 1883 they sent Ellen Nainby, a former Ackworth girl. Ellen's work was in the *zenanas*, visiting secluded women in their homes, but she lived with Rachel in the Jumerati house and became her treasured friend. Gayford also realised that the time had come for a separate girls' orphanage, and he encouraged one of Ellen's Ackworth schoolfellows, Anna Louise Evens, to offer herself for

the job. In the midst of these concerns, he and Harriet had had to bear a great personal sorrow in the death of their infant son, their only child.

The FFMA had not accepted Gayford's earlier resignation, but had treated his years of medical study as extended leave. When he had completed his studies they invited him to return to Hoshangabad; from there the villages north of the river, whose need for medical services had so much impressed him, were within easy reach. So it came about that by the beginning of 1886 the Gayfords were back in their old home; they had a special welcome from Rachel and Ellen, Bal Mukand and Ruth (who knew of the death of their baby). Bal Mukand was living in his own home in the city, and running the Balaganj School, where his work won high praise from the Government Inspector. And as usual he was full of ideas.

Gayford's first step was to move the medical work away from the mission compound to a more accessible rented building in the city, where he soon had many patients. His next step was to visit Bhopal and discuss with the State officials how he might co-operate with them to meet the needs of their villages. He met with a friendly reception, and hopes ran high. Meanwhile, apart from his medical service, he had much to do on the mission compound. The house itself, which had stood empty all through the monsoon of 1885, needed major repairs. A portion of the compound had been rented out; Lewis Mendes, his friend and brother-in-law, strongly advised him to resume possession, level and plant it. That too was done. Anna Evens, who had been accepted by the FFMA for the orphanage work, was due to arrive at the end of the year, and a second bungalow and orphanage building were needed. Gayford assembled materials and prepared foundations.

The Gayfords were therefore busy and happy; but there was anger and grief in Sohagpur. A military transit camp had been set up near the town, and Williams with his former army connections naturally enjoyed visiting it. He may or may not have been indiscreet but malicious gossip about him began to spread. The tensions between him and Baker were (inevitably) common knowledge locally, and mischief-mongers made sure that the gossip reached the ears of the Bakers in London. The fat was in the fire. Williams blamed the whole community, refused to attend Monthly Meetings at Hoshangabad or receive them in Sohagpur, and wrote to London asking to be 'relieved'. The Bakers were also disturbed, and wondered for a time whether they should resign from the FFMA. It may be that the charged atmosphere of that summer contributed to the tragic blunders which were to follow.

The Bakers were expected to return to India at the end of 1886, and local Friends began to plan their future work. The first idea was that they might open a new 'station' at Seoni Malwa, a step which Baker had been

urging on the London committee for several years. On further reflection however it was decided that Gayford would be unable to meet the demands of an expanding medical service unless Baker took charge of the other work in Hoshangabad. There should be no difficulty about living quarters; several Government bungalows were lying vacant, and the Bakers as members of the English Club could certainly rent one.

When these proposals reached London there was an unforeseen obstacle. The Bakers refused to live anywhere but in 'their' mission bungalow, regardless of the predicament in which this would place the Gayfords – for it was well-known that as she was Indian they would be unable to rent a Government bungalow. The London committee nevertheless complied with the Bakers' wishes and instructed the Gayfords to vacate the mission house in their favour. The Hoshangabad Friends were so deeply hurt and angry that the whole group, British and Indian together, resigned in protest.

At the end of the year the Bakers returned, bringing with them Anna Evens, and accompanied by A. J. Crosfield and Dr John Dixon, who had been appointed by the London committee to deal on the spot with the Williams affair. The Gayfords had vacated the mission house; they met the London Friends, handed over charge, and left the district, going first to Harriet's relatives in Allahabad. Bal Mukand and his family went with them. The Williams left India for a leave that was long overdue and their place in Sohagpur was taken by Henry and Susan de St Dalmas, independent missionaries of good family<sup>3</sup> recruited in India. Crosfield and Dixon persuaded Ellen Nainby to withdraw her resignation; all her sympathies were with the 'rebels', but she could not bear to leave the helpless Rachel alone.

This unhappy conflict was undoubtedly embittered by personal prejudice, but differences of principle also underlay it. In 1881 a Quaker doctor, C. Tregelles Fox, had turned his back on the need at Hoshangabad because he did not believe that medicine should be used – as Baker was openly using it – as a bait to attract converts. Neither did Gayford believe it. Fox spoke for him, and equally for Rachel Metcalfe, when 10 years later, without mentioning names, he described medicine, education and industrial training as being 'as truly missionary work as preaching the Gospel. There is no real division – the doctor or teacher is called "to speak a word in season"'.<sup>4</sup> There were other differences. Was the task of the FFMA to enable those 'on whom the Lord has laid his hands' to obey their calling? Or was it to lay its own hands on people – as it did on John Williams – and use them for a plan not their own? The questions kept on recurring.

In 1886 Anna Evens was a woman of about 30 – Samuel Baker's age with varied practical experience. Her father was a hard-headed Quaker

businessman. He had sent her to school at Ackworth, for it had such a good reputation that well-to-do families like his were glad to send their daughters there. At Ackworth Anne made friends in all social classes, and later continued to do so among the families of her father's workmen. An illness in adolescence affected her hearing, but she 'set herself to be useful and forget her own troubles'. She helped her father with book-keeping, she learned to draw and to cook, and opened a school where her cookery lessons were very popular. Then she met the Gayfords and heard of the need in Hoshangabad. Appearing rather nervously before the FFMA committee she was set at ease by an unexpected question: Can you *cook*?<sup>5</sup>

Knowing the Gayfords as she did, the events of her first few days at Hoshangabad must have been a shock, but she lived with the Bakers and 'set herself to be useful'. The new 'Riverside' bungalow and orphanage had to be completed; she supervised the building and planned the equipment. She helped Anna Baker with her baby Margaret. She made shuttlecocks (a skill learned at Ackworth) to give them all some exercise during the hot weather. And finally she moved Rachel Metcalfe's family of orphans into their new home. Like Rachel and Ellen she kept in touch with the Gayfords; Harriet sent her a gift of some household equipment.

During the seven years when Rachel had cared for the orphans in Jumerati, Bhuriya Yesodha had married a Christian boy; some of the others, unable to overcome their earlier privations, had died in spite of all her care. When Riverside was opened she kept two, the smallest baby of all, and also 'Topsy'. Topsy was difficult, mentally backward and outwardly unattractive, but specially dear to Rachel just *because* of this. Rachel had a soft spot for 'black sheep'. In 1851 her own rebel brother Joseph John had been disowned by Friends while she was working in Yorkshire. Rachel did not disown him, and it must have rejoiced her heart when he was honourably re-instated 20 years later.<sup>6</sup> She also kept in touch with her brother William's children. About 1875 the eldest, John, had emigrated to Massachusetts, followed by his brother and sister. The young man married, and when children began to appear in 1884 Rachel sent them Indian gifts, including a wonderful 'Noah's Ark' whose human and animal figures had been skilfully carved by the craftsmen-toymakers of Budni village, which faces Hoshangabad on the northern bank of the river.

With most of the children gone, Rachel was still happily busy. Many sought her out, for 'she was always there, when anyone needed help or counsel'. She also put together a book of devotional bible readings in Hindi, called *Daily Bread*. It was based on a booklet which Joseph John Gurney had prepared 50 years earlier to help the children at Ackworth to read and love the Bible, and which was in use when Rachel worked there in 1847. Her Hindi book was found 'very useful'; it was printed and many



copies were distributed or sold. And as always she had a school, with which Ellen Nainby helped her.

The Bakers had a hard time in 1888; their baby Margaret died, and Anna's beloved father also. In the hot season of 1889 both they and Ellen Nainby took much-needed holidays, and Rachel went to stay at Riverside with Anna Evens and the children. May was an exceptionally hot month; Anna grew anxious about Rachel's health and wrote to ask Ellen to come home. Ellen arrived early in June, to Rachel's delight, and she talked happily and long. Then came a stroke. Rachel had every care, but did not speak again and died on the third day. Her body was buried in the Government cemetery beside the little graves of her orphan children, and her few personal possessions went to her family in England and America.<sup>7</sup>

In the loneliness and pain which had so often been her lot, did Rachel ever remember the young woman in Croydon who had first turned her mind to India – and who in the end outlived her? On the tombstone of Frances Knox<sup>8</sup> are words taken from the story of Mary in the garden of the Resurrection: 'Jesus said to her, Mary! She swung round and said to him, My Master!' For Rachel too Jesus had been to the end a living, trusted Master. In 1865, with the prospect of India close at hand, she had composed a hymn:

I will not fear the wilderness  
Nor dangers yet to come,  
With Jesus still to love and bless  
And guide me to my home.

It remains to record what is known of the Friends who left Hoshangabad for Allahabad in 1886.

Charles Gayford was offered employment in a mission hospital but did not accept it – perhaps because he did not approve the common practice of treating patients as a captive audience for Christian preaching, perhaps because he was more strongly drawn to remote, needy rural areas. A possible opening occurred in one such area in the Himalayan *terai* (foothills) but for some reason the venture proved impracticable and by the summer of 1888 he and Harriet were back in England.

As a medical student in London Gayford had attended Meeting for Worship and taken part in the vocal ministry, and in 1885 the Devonshire House Monthly Meeting recorded him as a 'minister'.<sup>9</sup> When he returned three years later, after all the turmoil of the intervening years, he wrote again to the Monthly Meeting submitting his resignation from the Society of Friends. It was not easily accepted. In a long personal conversation with two senior Friends, Gayford explained that he had given the matter 'full and careful consideration', and that he no longer accepted the Quaker position 'as regards Baptism and the Supper', while he continued to feel

in unity with much Quaker teaching and practice. He therefore 'thought it right to return to the communion of the Church of England in which he was brought up'. He seems to have reached conclusions similar to those of his fellow-churchman Percy Dearmer, who urged Friends to witness to their distinctive insights *within* the church.<sup>10</sup>

Little more is known. By 1891 Gayford had earned his MD, and for 20 years or more he worked among the poor in the city of London and was honorary surgeon to a Cottage Hospital at Blackheath. Then he and Harriet retired to Brixton Hill where he died in 1917. Wartime restrictions on the use of paper forbade the printing of an obituary notice by the British Medical Association; all that remains is Harriet's moving three-line tribute in the *South London Times* to the 'loving and devoted husband' with whom she had shared '42 years of most happy married life'. After three years of lonely widowhood her body was laid beside his in the same grave.<sup>11</sup>

In 1886 Bal Mukand's sense of religious vocation was as strong as ever. He was baptised, and prepared for ordination in the CMS Divinity School at Allahabad, and was then put in charge of a small congregation at Pratapgarh 40 miles to the north. He was there when famine struck in 1896, and he and Ruth cared for orphan girls, as his father and Rachel Metcalfe had done in Hoshangabad 15 years earlier. In 1897 he was recalled to Allahabad to join the staff of the Divinity School.

Bal Mukand was then a man of 40 in the full maturity of his powers. For the next 16 years he directed the study of Hinduism, a task for which he was well qualified. His youth had been spent in a cultured Brahmin home, his knowledge of Sanskrit had earned him the title of Pandit, his personal religious experience and his liveliness made him an admirable teacher. As his own children grew up he took care that boys and girls alike should have a good education. Then in 1913 he and Ruth moved to the



*Bal Mukand with his wife Ruth.*

newly-organised missionary language school at Landour in the Himalayan foothills, where his eldest daughter Pushpavati was trained as a teacher at the Woodstock School.

In Landour Bal Mukand built himself a house, a house with a traditional 'prayer room' and a scrupulously clean Brahmin kitchen. He regularly washed his own clothes, and when the house needed white-washing or repairs he joined in the work, joking with his labourers. After he retired he would spend hours among the people in the bazaar – people were his abiding interest. Ruth would sometimes complain laughingly that he was always late for lunch: 'He gets into some religious discussion and just forgets the time!'

When their eight children were married, the traditional social barriers were ignored – husbands or wives might be of Muslim or Bengali origin, one was a Scot. Did not God and all humanity 'belong to the *same* caste'? One son was ordained in the church, one entered the Indian Medical Service, two were Principals of High Schools, and the daughters' husbands held similar responsible positions. The parents visited them in the winter months; children and grandchildren found their way to Landour in the summer.

Fifty years of loving partnership ended when Ruth died in 1928. Bal Mukand kept on the old home but spent much time with Pushpavati in Ajmer. There the old man, now in his 70s, built with his own hands a little room for himself on the verandah of her home.<sup>12</sup> Then, during the Second World War, an engineer grandson joined an army supply unit, and after the war was over was posted to the Army Engineering Centre at Pachmarhi. His grandfather joined him, to spend his last years in the district of his birth.

Bal Mukand died in Pachmarhi in 1950, aged 93. The flat slab which marks his grave in the churchyard is so distinctive in its stark Quaker simplicity that it must surely have been so carved at his own request:

PT. BALMUKAND NAIK  
BORN HOSHANGABAD 1857  
DIED PACHMARHI 1950

That is all.

## Notes to Chapter VII

1 This and other quotations from Baker's letters are taken from files in the possession of his grandson Patrick O'Brien Baker, who has generously permitted their use.

2 Gayford's Jabalpur friend the CMS missionary Walter Champion had commented on this in 1874: 'It *can* be done and *has* been done, three acres being sufficient for a family. But Christians have a prejudice against village life and want towns.'

3 Susan was a cousin of the distinguished Henry Lawrence and his brother the Viceroy.

4 Speech at the Darlington Missionary Conference, 1896, *The Friend* 2nd October 1896, p.650.

5 Stories of Anna Evens' activities come from her *Journal* preserved in Friends House Library, London.

6 I owe this information to the late John Haines, who found it in the records of Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting (Liverpool area).

7 Her niece Rachel Alice, a much-respected nurse, received Rachel's portable writing-desk, and kept in it the letters she had had from her aunt in India. The desk is a family heirloom, but the letters cannot now be traced. The silver teaspoons Rachel took to India in 1866 also survive. So does the Noah's Ark, enjoyed by successive generations.

8 In the churchyard at Edmundthorpe, Leicestershire, where Frances spent her years of widowhood with her unmarried son Lindsay. It was probably he who chose the very appropriate inscription.

9 The practice of recording the names of those whose vocal ministry is recognised as generally helpful is now no longer followed.

10 See his article in *The Friend*, 1911, p.239.

11 Her whole remaining property, less than £100, was left in her will to her solicitor.

12 The account of Bal Mukand is based on information from his grandsons the brothers Erasmus and the recollections of their aged mother Pushpavati. Friends in Nagpur diocese supplied information about Pachmarhi and a photograph of the grave.

## CHAPTER VIII

## The Invisible Stream

*He showed me a river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal,  
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

THE BOOK OF REVELATION 22 : 1

THE CITY OF ALLAHABAD, where Bal Mukand spent so much of his youth and his maturity, was then the capital of a Province roughly corresponding to the present State of Uttar Pradesh. 'Allahabad' is the name given by the Muslim rulers of India, but (like Hoshangabad) the city has a more ancient history and a more ancient name. It is 'Prayag', the Confluence; it stands where two great rivers, Ganga (the Ganges) and Yamuna (the Jumna) flow into one another. It is said that a third, invisible river joins them there. This is Saraswathi, river of divine wisdom, whose presence gives the united stream its power to cleanse and bless.

From the beginning of the 19th century two visible rivers of Quaker interest had flowed into India. There was a river of humanitarian service, there was also a river of religious appeal, the one touching the public welfare, the other the individual conscience. The rivers of 'mission' and 'service' continue to run; each new generation reflects on the right place for a confluence of the two. What of the 'invisible third'? Have Friends known any River Saraswathi, any wisdom and power which can purify the two currents and make them a blessing to the world? Is it possible to trace the waters of the invisible stream in Quaker life in the 19th century? Certainly it is, both in the west and in India. That well-spring of life in the heart, of which Jesus had spoken, was known both to Friends and to those others among whom and with whom they worked.

One source of the living water was an old book, *The Imitation of Christ*, written in Europe in the 15th century at a time of great distress. The book has spoken to the heart of humanity, in east and west alike, through all the centuries since. It was treasured by some of the Friends who came to

India in the 1880's; it was treasured equally by some of their Hindu contemporaries.

Another book, less famous, also spoke of this well-spring of life in the heart. It was written about 1838 by a gentle clergyman named Frederick Myers, who longed to offer help to those many young people who like Charles Darwin were unable to accept some of the church's doctrines. Myers called his book *Catholic Thoughts*. 'Don't let the doctrines trouble you,' he said in effect. 'They are after all *very subordinate*. The *core* of the faith is loving obedience to Jesus the Christ, and those who may never have heard of Jesus are all nevertheless children of the Father, and may receive the gift of the Spirit.' For many years copies of this book circulated privately from hand to hand, but it was not actually published until after its author's death.

Frances Mary Knox wrote nothing, but she lived in the same spirit; we see her in her later years through the eyes of two of her sons, Edmund with his fine mind and irrepressible enjoyment of life, Lindsay in whose rural home she spent her 12 years of widowhood. She sat in her room in her simple Quaker dress, serene and much loved, practising among those around her that 'loving obedience to Jesus' of which Myers had spoken. In that room 'Christ was the "the unseen guest". . . . There were no harsh words; the motive power was always love.'<sup>1</sup>

Her son Edmund, a priest and afterwards a bishop of the church, united in his own person the two 'visible streams' of religious vocation and humanitarian concern. As a student in Oxford he had spent himself in unpaid service in the poorest parts of the town; later he turned his back on the comforts of a country parish and chose to live among the needy in the squalor of Aston-juxta-Birmingham. Like his mother he drank from the invisible stream, knowing 'the Voice of God within'; like his Quaker contemporary Rendel Harris he believed that 'Truth and Love were meant to advance together'.<sup>2</sup>

Others, both in England and in India, 'walked the lowly and hidden lanes of our common life'.<sup>3</sup> One was James Buckingham's journalist colleague Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice owed much to the writing of William Penn; along with the India-born J. M. Ludlow he backed Joseph Pease's British India Society; with Ludlow he pleaded for a 'Christian socialism' which should challenge both 'unchristian socialists and unsocial Christians' and satisfy both reason and conscience. He also echoed Myers in his plea that 'all that is just, lovely and generous' in *all* religions should be recognised as the fruit of the one Holy Spirit, and therefore questioned the missionary attitudes of his time: 'Jesus did *not* say, Go and convert them from their religions to another religion. He said this: . . . Go . . . and *teach* all nations . . . so long as we think of Christianity chiefly as a *Western*

or English religion, which is to *drive out* different Asiatic religions, so long I think it is good for us to find lions in our path of proselytism.<sup>4</sup>

Maurice and Myers were followed by a younger man, the Cambridge historian J. R. Seeley, who in 1865 published a study of Jesus which he called *Ecce Homo* (*Behold the Man*). Behold one, said Seeley, whose supreme *humanity* calls out the enthusiastic personal devotion 'which makes men pure, generous and humane'. Coming at a time when the doctrine of Jesus' 'divinity' was presented in a way that obscured his real manhood, the book had a powerful appeal. In India it meant much to the Bengali thinker Keshab Chandra Sen. 'We are seeking Christ,' he said, 'as he was in Palestine, going about doing good and giving the water of life freely. You must be content,' he added (echoing Maurice) 'to let Christianity come to us in its own *oriental* dress; let us absorb all humanity and all truth.'<sup>5</sup>

The 'river of the water of life' flowed in western India in that man of 'selfless and saintly integrity', Dadabhai Naoroji, and in Martin Wood's fellow-worker Mahadev Govind Ranade, 'the most forgiving of men'. Such men were examples of 'the modern Indian *Sannyasi*, [who] wears the garb of ordinary men, mingles with them as one of themselves, yet inwardly is the renouncer'.<sup>6</sup>

Another such 'renouncer' was known both in India and in Britain. Thomas Valpy French was a contemporary of Frances Mary Knox, and his wife like Frances was of Quaker stock.<sup>7</sup> While the Knoxes were in South India, French founded St John's College in Agra and led it for many years. His 'noble saintliness' won him the friendship of students who at first were sullenly hostile to Christian teaching. In the 1860's he established a theological college at Lahore, studied the *Granth Sahib*, the *Tulsi Ramayana*, the hymns of Kabir, and sought out Hindu and Muslim devotees who aspired to the unseen Reality beyond 'the things of Time'. Like his contemporary and counterpart Elkanah Beard he tried to share his faith 'without losing a grain, yet measuredly as the people can bear it'; a wise and gentle charity shines through all his letters.<sup>8</sup> In 1874 he came to England and brought his family to Oxford; there his daughter Ellen met and married Frances Knox' son Edmund.<sup>9</sup>

In 1865, the year in which Seeley published *Ecce Homo*, a young man from a very different background was invited to lead religious meetings on a Quaker burial ground in East London. William Booth had grown up in great poverty; in adolescence he had been attracted by the warmth and informality of a Methodist church, while he scraped a living as assistant to a pawnbroker. In the church he met his wife Catherine, whose background of poverty was similar to his own. During those years both of them discovered the 'well-spring' of the waters of life, and were filled with enthusiasm to share their experience as itinerant preachers, like George Fox and the Wesley brothers before them, often in the open air.

So the Salvation Army began its battle with Sin and the Devil, capturing for God 'the Devil's best tunes', and offering its recruits the same gaiety, warmth and comradeship as did the Devil's strongholds, the public houses. Its soldiers, like the early Friends and the early Methodists, often suffered violence. 'Hundreds of young working men and women endured hardship, obloquy and obscene abuse for their God and their General.'<sup>10</sup> The Army survived and grew, and by 1880 fair-minded people like Dr Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury, were giving friendly support, recognising the value of its work among the 'dregs' of society who had previously been untouched by any religious group.

In 1882 Catherine Booth spoke to a crowded session of London Yearly Meeting,<sup>11</sup> and appealed to Friends to 'get out of the ruts' of respectable religious observance and join in the tasks of practical compassion to which the Salvation Army felt itself called, and there were a number of Friends who responded. And in that same year 1882 an 'Expeditionary Force' of the Salvation Army landed in Bombay.

The commander of the Force was Captain Frederick Tucker. His grandfather had served the East India Company with great distinction, his father and uncles had won the trust and affection of the Indian people, he himself had been a young civil servant in Punjab when he read of the Salvation Army's work in England. On leave there in 1881 he sought out General Booth, resigned from the civil service and returned to India as leader of the new venture. The journalists who met the ship when it docked in Bombay were amazed to find that the 'Force' totalled three men and one young woman!

Officially they encountered great hostility; imprisonment, fines and distraint of goods for such 'offences' as music and processions in the streets. But this persecution, and their own cheerful patience, called out a great deal of sympathy from fair-minded people in India. In Calcutta Keshab Chandra Sen appealed to the Viceroy to uphold the principle of religious neutrality; if Hindus were allowed music and processions, he asked, why not Christians? The popular liberal Lord Ripon took action, the harassment ceased, and before a year had passed the Army had a Bombay headquarters and stations in Calcutta and Madras, Lahore and Pune. Tucker, who had studied Sanskrit and the Indian spiritual tradition, knew that 'in the eyes of an Indian, religion means self-denial'. Under his leadership the foreign personnel adopted Indian dress, simple Indian ways of life, and Indian personal names, Tucker himself becoming *Fakir Singh*, the renouncer.

The Society of Friends in Britain naturally felt the impact of all these currents of thought and experience; a process of intellectual and spiritual ferment had begun, and in 1878 Frederick Myers' *Catholic Thoughts* was published at last. Young Friends read it eagerly and began to express

themselves on the same lines, and London Yearly Meeting listened to their voices with increasing sympathy. In 1884 there appeared a book called *A Reasonable Faith*, the work of three much-respected Friends, and only two or three years later, in 1887, came a crucial turning-point. A group of Yearly Meetings in America had drawn up what was known as the Richmond Declaration, which sought to promote unity among Friends by inviting all Yearly Meetings to subscribe to the same doctrinal statement. London refused to do so; even though many English Friends would personally have had no difficulty in doing so, the Yearly Meeting held fast to the old Quaker insight that the true basis of unity is something deeper than uniformity of opinion.

It was natural therefore that among the Friends who came to India during the last 20 years of the 19th century there should be much diversity of social, political and religious outlook. Some clung to old patterns of work, some pioneered new ones; some came for the first time with the support of American Friends, others as officers of the Salvation Army. And there was one couple, Philip and Annie Thompson, who were not part of any 'visible stream' of Quaker service, but whose presence opened channels of communication between various groups of Friends in India which otherwise might not have existed.

Philip Thompson was the son of a Quaker ironmonger in Bridgwater, Somerset, and had been educated at Bootham School. In 1865 he had been the first Bootham boy to matriculate in London University, where he studied civil engineering. He then went into partnership with another Friend, William Alexander, in Cirencester; it was in Alexander's home there that he met his future wife Annie Pim Frankland.<sup>12</sup>

The Franklands were Quaker linen merchants in Liverpool and were connected, in business and by marriage, with Irish Friends. Annie's uncle was that Thomas Frankland who had supported Joseph Pease's British India Society and been one of the chief speakers at its inaugural meetings in 1839. His brother John, Annie's father, had died in 1862; his sister had married and settled in Cirencester, and after her husband's death Annie's mother and her sister Maria had gone to live with her in Cirencester, where Maria married William Alexander. In due course Annie paid her sister a visit, and when Philip met her, as he recorded, 'the matter was settled in two weeks'! They were married in 1874 and spent the next few years in Cirencester, but Annie developed severe arthritis and was advised to live in a warmer climate.

Among their business acquaintances in Cirencester was a young woman whose relatives were trading in tea and coffee from a base at Coonoor in the Nilgiri Hills. By then Indian tea had become an important commercial crop, and the Stanes brothers were leaders in the business. They

encouraged Philip Thompson to come to Coonoor, where they knew that a man of his qualifications could find work. Philip and Annie therefore arrived in Coonoor in the summer of 1883, leaving their two little boys with Frankland relatives until they saw how things would work out.

Things worked out well. The Stanes found them a place to stay, and introduced Philip to a man called Groves with whom he was soon in partnership, helping to run a very mixed business including building and engineering work. Annie and Philip got a home of their own, 'Peach Cottage', and Annie's sister Susanna brought the children to join them. Annie's health improved rapidly, and a third son was born in 1886. The older boys, encouraged by their father to be self-reliant and independent, played happily with other children in the local park.

The Thompsons had not long settled in Coonoor when the storm broke over the Ilbert Bill. A good many British military men had retired to the pleasant climate of the hills, and most British civilians, including Philip Thompson's partner Groves, joined them in abusing the bill. Philip himself 'stuck to his liberalism', though he seems to have been a minority of one! His reaction was very different from that of his near-contemporary Baker, of whose presence in India as a fellow-Friend he was aware. The Thompsons lost no time in getting in touch with the Bakers and invited them to spend a summer holiday in their home in Coonoor in 1885. The Bakers however were due to take leave in England that year, and the visit did not take place till 1890.

It was not only in political matters that the two men differed. Samuel Baker was a townsman, and natural beauty seems to have meant little to him; the magnificent forests of the Hoshangabad district aroused in him only the terror of the unknown.<sup>13</sup> Philip Thompson took a keen interest in his natural surroundings; his early letters from Coonoor overflow with his delight in the new flowers and ferns by the roadsides and the majesty of the hills.

Professionally Thompson the engineer found that the most interesting thing in Coonoor was the plan for a mountain railway to provide access from the plains. Discussions had been going on for some time when the Thompsons arrived, and in 1885 a scheme for a rack railway was approved; it was to climb the steep narrow gorge down which the Coonoor river rushes to join the Bhavani at the foot of the hills. Finance was not easily secured, but at last the work was completed. It was Philip who built the many iron bridges, large and small, which were needed along the route.<sup>14</sup>

Such then was the position in the 1880's, when Quaker encounters with India began to take new and varied forms.

## Notes to Chapter VIII

- 1 Quoted from Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Knox Brothers*, 1977, p.39.
- 2 Rendel Harris, letter to Rufus Jones 1897, quoted in *Memoirs of J. Rendel Harris*, ed. Irene Pickard, 1978, p.9.
- 3 The phrase is used by George Boobyer in *The Friend*, 22nd September 1950, p.698.
- 4 F.D.Maurice, *The Indian Crisis. Five Sermons*, Cambridge 1857, pp.12-13.
- 5 The words are reported by the FFMA secretary Henry Stanley Newman, who met K.C.Sen in Calcutta, 1881.
- 6 H.R.Jinarajadasa, *The Meeting of the East and the West*, 1921, pp.63-64.
- 7 She belonged to the Lloyd family of Birmingham.
- 8 A number of her letters are preserved in the CMS archives, University Library, Birmingham.
- 9 Edmund and Ellen named their first son (later to be 'Evøe' of *Punch*) Edward *Valpy* Knox. And in India Bal Mukand's daughter Pushpavati named one of her baby sons *Thomas Valpy* Erasmus.
- 10 E.St.John Ervine, *God's Soldier: General William Booth*, 1934.
- 11 The speech is reprinted in John D.Waldron, *The Quakers and the Salvationists*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1990, pp.45-55.
- 12 Material about the Thompson-Frankland family is derived from relevant Monthly Meeting records in England and references in contemporary Indian directories. Philip Thompson's surviving diaries and letters were consulted by courtesy of his grandchildren Henry Frankland Thompson and Jean H. Thompson, who added their own recollections.
- 13 Baker entered the forest once, along with the District Forest Officer, to select timber for the Hoshangabad Meeting House. He was glad to get safely out again. It may be that one factor in the personal tensions between him and Gayford was that Gayford as a countryman had a very different outlook.
- 14 There is a strong family tradition that Philip Thompson 'built railway bridges': I have been unable to discover any detailed records of the construction of the Nilgiri Railway which might confirm this, but in view of the known dates I regard the tradition as almost certainly correct.

## CHAPTER IX

# The Changing Nineties

ONE OF MARTIN WOOD's older contemporaries in Bombay was a cultured American named George Bowen. Bowen conducted a weekly newspaper, *The Guardian*, which commented on Indian public affairs 'with comprehensiveness and candour' from a Christian point of view. The paper had a good reputation and was widely read, and when Henry Stanley Newman, the FFMA secretary, visited Wood in Bombay in 1880, he had met Bowen also.

In 1887 George Bowen died, and Newman formed a Quaker trust and bought the paper. A Quaker editor was ready to hand. Alfred Dyer had reached Bombay that year on a special mission. He and his wife Helen represented a strong Quaker group in England which was working for the abolition of legalised prostitution, an evil which, as the law then stood, affected India also. In addition to this, the Dyers were encouraged to do what they could about the traffic in drink and opium. Dyer was a printer by trade, and he took over *The Guardian* and made it the vehicle of his campaign.

The causes Dyer had at heart were worthy causes which many Friends and others in India were ready to support. Nearly 50 years earlier Joseph Pease had spoken out about the opium traffic; more recently Martin Wood's friend A. O. Hume, as a District officer, had bluntly called the Government's income from licensed drinkshops 'the wages of sin'. Samuel Baker reported that the Bishop of Bombay was in full sympathy with the demand for the abolition of licensed brothels. Unfortunately Dyer's style of campaigning rapidly alienated responsible people. Towards the end of 1888 Samuel Baker went to Bombay to convalesce after an illness, and was the Dyers' guest there. He was greatly troubled by Dyer's obsessive mentality and uncharitable language. 'His cause is right,' Baker commented, 'but he uses such very strong language that one feels ashamed to acknowledge him as a member of the Society of Friends. The Government would give a fair hearing to a fairly put case – but *not* to invective.' Alfred Dyer – and his cause – paid the penalty. He had well-documented evidence about the abuses of the drinkshops, but he



himself had closed men's ears to his words. *The Guardian* also suffered; Dyer was unable to listen with courtesy to any criticism of his own views and methods and refused to print dissenting opinion. Naturally, many of the paper's former supporters gradually ceased to subscribe.

Other Quaker links with Bombay were being made through the Salvation Army. The first stimulus seems to have come through a Quaker couple in Brighton, Alfred and Bertha Smith, who by 1883 had thrown in their lot with the Army's work in their own town. Alfred was an accountant by profession; he made friends with a young Brighton bookseller named Edward Butler, and brought him into the Army too. In 1888 Captain Butler was sent to Bombay, where under John Lampard's leadership his artistic gifts were soon noticed. Later, as Staff-Captain Santosham he was transferred to Madras.

By about 1888 Alfred and Bertha Smith had given up their own comfortable home in Brighton and plunged into Army service in London, and in 1890 they too were transferred to Bombay. Alfred took charge of accounts, and Bertha made herself quietly useful in the bookshop and behind the scenes, becoming 'Mother' in the household and 'a perfect treasure' to the Territorial Headquarters. But they had been in Bombay less than a year when she had a fatal attack of typhoid fever. Alfred and Helen Dyer were present at the funeral; the tributes to her in *The Guardian*, reprinted in *The Indian War Cry*, are moving in their simplicity: 'She spoke little (Quaker-like) of her religious experience; it was known in life, in perfect sincerity and candour. . . . She worshipped the Father in Spirit and in truth.' A few months later her bereaved husband received yet another promotion, but does not appear again in Army records, though he did not lose touch with India.

Meanwhile, in January 1891, a happier event had taken place in Madras. Staff-Captain Santosham married Captain Kristina, who as Elizabeth McLaren had reached India from Canada in 1888, a short time after he did. Before her marriage she had been posted in the Nilgiri Hills, where she – and her husband – probably knew Philip and Annie Thompson. Soon after the wedding, unknown to herself, she made a deep impression on a young Indian Christian from Madura, who had been strongly attracted by the Salvation Army ideal of renunciation; he went into one of its public meetings in Madras, and what he saw impressed itself on his mind 'like a photograph': a young white woman, in a simple sari, sitting on the platform beside two Indian girls. That young Indian enlisted in the Army, and during the years that followed he too was to have a number of links with Quakers.

Philip Thompson himself helped another Quaker recruit to settle in India. Annie's next older sister, Eliza Frankland, had been for 20 years Headmistress of the Friends' Stramongate School in Kendal, where their

eldest sister had settled and where their mother had spent her later years. In 1888, at the age of 46, she resigned this post and joined the Thompsons, seeking an opening for missionary service. It was possibly Philip's friends the Stanes, Christian enthusiasts as they were, who put her in touch with a small mission organised by Anglo-Indians or Eurasians from Cuddalore (where the East India Company's Fort St David had once stood). She worked for them for two or three years at a little town called Panruti, and then she too became part of the widening Quaker network.

From the end of 1889 and during the following years, a number of new missionaries were sent to the Hoshangabad district by the FFMA, with the hope of 'occupying' the whole territory which the Friends regarded as their special field of service. In view of the various currents of thought which had influenced the religious life of England during the previous years, it is not surprising that the newcomers had widely different attitudes and interests. The senior among them was Joseph Taylor, who had been Samuel Baker's contemporary at Bootham School in York. He was a man with many interests and broad human sympathies, matured during 15 years of independent business life in an English provincial town. He knew something of Friends' dealings with India, and deplored the way in which the Calcutta group had been ignored; he knew of George Bowen's ideals for *The Guardian* and of John Bright's work for India during his own young manhood. He believed that Friends should not confine themselves to one small district, but should share the life and aspirations of India as a whole. When he felt led to personal service his first thought was to do as Philip Thompson had done and earn his own living in India independent of any 'mission'. It was with a certain reluctance that he agreed to accept the opening offered by the FFMA, in the new 'station' at Seoni Malwa for which Baker had been asking since 1883. It was not long, however, before among his fellow-recruits he found his life-partner, Katherine Murphy; for close on 40 years they were to give remarkable service, in Seoni Malwa and far beyond.

Other recruits of similar background, but narrower vision, were Charles and Mabel Terrell. Samuel Baker sent them to investigate openings in Sehore, the British Residency town in Bhopal State. The State was about the size of Yorkshire; it was Muslim ruled, but except in Bhopal City itself Muslims were a small minority of the population. In Gayford's time, in 1878, Bal Mukand and Ali Baksh had paid visits to Sehore and had a friendly reception. These informal contacts had been maintained, and in 1888 Colonel Wylie, the Political Agent, had sent two destitute boys to be cared for by the Bakers at Hoshangabad.

The Ruler of Bhopal was a woman, Shahjahan Begum Sahiba, who took her responsibilities seriously. In 1889-90, in consultation with

Colonel Wylie, she established a Leper Asylum near Sehore, and expressed her wish that all its inmates should be able to follow their own religious faith. Colonel Wylie, himself an earnest Christian, asked the Friends in Hoshangabad, the nearest mission, if they would undertake the care of the Christian patients. Hence the Terrells' visit. When they reached Bhopal they found themselves treated as State guests. The railway from Bhopal to Sehore had not then been built; they travelled the 30 miles in a carriage provided by the Begum, 'with a coachman and two footmen, and an armed sepoy on horseback behind.'

During the next few years Sehore became an organised 'station'. The Friends made an agreement with Colonel Wylie and his successors that mission work should only be expanded after consultation with the Political Agent, and in practice this caused no difficulty. The Terrells bought two bungalows, one for themselves and one for the two women missionaries who joined them. They opened schools for boys and girls and visited not only the Leper Asylum but also the jail. Later they built good school buildings on sites granted by the Resident, and used a big schoolroom for Meeting for Worship on Sundays. There was no access to Bhopal City where Christian missions were denied entry, but they could visit and preach in some of the smaller States of the Agency whose rulers imposed no ban.

The Terrells did not return to India after their leave in 1896. Earnest and hardworking as Charles was, there were facets of his personality which made him a rather difficult colleague, and his rigidity of outlook hardened with the years. But the foundations he had laid in Sehore endured, and made possible future service of great value.

In 1889-1890 the FFMA also broke new ground by including among its missionaries, as the Salvation Army did, men and women of 'working class' origin. Samuel and Anna Baker were very critical of this policy. 'Nothing but a London shop-girl!' they said scornfully of one of the new arrivals. It was Anna Evens who befriended the poor girl, and won her trust and devotion. (She never saw the London shops again, she died in 1892.) As for the men, 'why not send more Bootham boys instead?' asked Baker. Yet these recruits, Ernest Munnings and George Swan, and Francis and Ann Kilbey who followed in 1894, were among the most dynamic and independent-minded workers the FFMA ever had. And it was Joseph Taylor who gave them their apprenticeship.

Joseph Taylor listened with great interest to George Swan's story of what had brought him to India. George was a Gypsy; his boyhood had been spent fiddling and singing in a company of strolling players. Just as he entered his teens, while they were based in Gloucester, his whole family began to attend religious meetings and became Christians. George got a job in a foundry, and on Sundays went to the services at the Friends'

'Home Mission' hall. One day Caroline Pumphrey, Henry Newman's sister, spoke to the Missionary Helpers Union there. George, as he listened, became convinced that God was calling *him* to missionary service, and went and told her so. 'Can you read?' she asked. 'No,' replied George, 'but I can learn!' and at once began to attend night school. He made such good progress that Friends sent him to the Rawdon Friends School in Leeds. Life there was not easy, among boys so much younger than himself; in vacations, moreover, he was determined not to be a burden on anyone, and went back to work at the foundry. There too his old mates were apt to jeer at 'Gentleman George, full of book learning'. Years later, when asked what a missionary needed, George replied: 'A call from God, and a very thick skin!' He proved in those years that he had both. He completed his schooling, joined the Society of Friends, and celebrated his 21st birthday on board the ship which took him to India, a well-educated, thoughtful young man.

Joseph Taylor encouraged Munnings and Swan to follow up his own interest in the forest tribes around Seoni. It was not long however before Munnings was married, and he and his wife Sarah went to start another new 'station' at Khera, just outside the growing railway town Itarsi. Swan remained, and soon felt much more at home in the simple open-air life of the tribal hamlets than in the middle-class English ways of the mission 'stations'. He would take his fiddle and disappear for days together into the forests, sleeping among the people and coming to know them with an intimacy impossible for the 'carefully brought-up Friends' who were his colleagues. He found the values of his own Gypsy boyhood reflected in the natural disciplines and loyalties of the tribal villages. He soon discovered what grave injustice was being inflicted on these humble communities by moneylenders from outside, who first tempted them into debt and then used the 'British' law of the courts to seize in payment the lands which by ancient custom were inalienably theirs. As Martin Wood's friend William Wedderburn commented on a similar situation elsewhere, 'they sought *justice*, and we gave them *law*'. Swan was filled with compassion; he *knew* how it felt to be despised, ignorant, and bewildered. He saw the people drained of material security and spiritual strength by forces beyond their or his control, and he longed to bring them 'a Gospel of social deliverance no less than spiritual power'. He had no sympathy with missionaries who denounced them as devil-worshippers and sinners; he knew them to be more sinned against than sinning. What if they made offerings to the sun 'because their fathers did'? He knew that they also recognised 'a great god who made the sun' – a true insight, surely, on which he might build.

Meanwhile a crisis had arisen in the Salvation Army which was destined to have a large impact on Friends in India. General William Booth's youngest daughter, Colonel Lucy, had been sent to work in India in the

hope that the warm climate might improve her delicate health, and she joined her sister Emma Booth-Tucker there. When the General visited in 1891 Emma, who was seriously ill, was ordered home, but Lucy remained till 1892. Early that year she and John Lampard both went to England on leave, and in April *The War Cry* announced that they were engaged to be married. Almost immediately however Lampard wrote to the General in great distress, saying that he felt 'unfitted and unworthy' to marry his daughter, and that in order to save her from future unhappiness it seemed right to break off the engagement. This letter, which was duly published, raised a storm. It was bewildering, and humiliating, that anyone could wish to break off an engagement with one of the Booths. An 'investigation' was ordered, but no report was published. Instead, the verdict of an unnamed physician, 'reputed for treating mental diseases,' is quoted: John Lampard 'was so mentally deranged as not to be responsible for his action'. 'The impression left is that John Lampard found himself less in love with his General's daughter than he had supposed, and very generously allowed himself to be stigmatised as a sort of lunatic so that the face of the Booth family might be saved.'<sup>2</sup> Lampard disappeared, abruptly and finally, from Salvation Army records.

These events had a notable effect upon those who had known and respected John Lampard in Bombay. Alfred Smith found himself employment in Southern Africa, in an industrial mission on the Zambesi. Edward and Elizabeth Butler stayed for a time, happy in their work in South India, but then resigned, saying quite plainly that they did not like the way things were done at the Headquarters in London. Alice Weston, who had come to Bombay in 1888 as a girl of 19 and worked under Lampard there, left the Army to marry a Mr Lukey who had a mission to seamen in Sind. John Lampard himself came back to India, and by 1893 had started an independent, non-sectarian 'mission to the Gonds' in the Balaghat district of the Central Provinces. It is *possible* that Joseph Taylor had already met him in Bombay on his own first arrival in 1889, but in any case he very quickly got to know of Lampard's work among the Gonds, and the two men became close friends.

A short time afterwards an Ojha<sup>3</sup> chief named Jagraj, who was greatly attracted by Christian teaching, persuaded his clan that they should all become Christians together. Joseph Taylor suggested that they should create a Christian village community in the way that some of the Gonds in Balaghat were doing under John Lampard's leadership. They settled in an abandoned village called Bhanthna, among the Satpura forests between Itarsi and Seoni Malwa. Eight miles away over the hills was another village, Sali, which had a mixed population of Ojhas, Gonds and Karkus. Jagraj soon persuaded his fellow-Ojhas in Sali to adopt the new religious teaching, and the other Sali villagers followed suit. Soon, along the forest

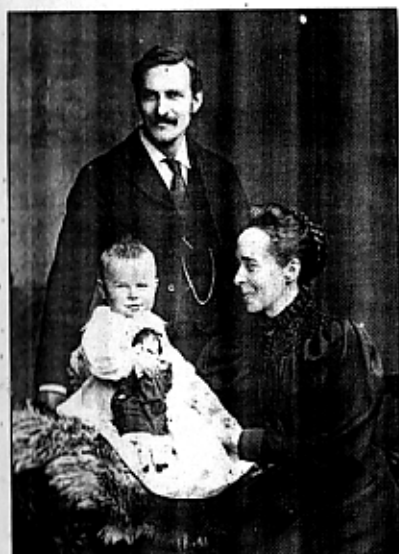
tracks between Itarsi to the east and Seoni Malwa to the west, there were several such Christian communities. They were as Rachel Metcalfe might have said, 'very young in the school of Christ,' but in their modest way they were a fulfilment of Pandit Govind Ram's dream of a natural community living by Christian values. Joseph Taylor and George Swan encouraged each village to manage its own affairs through its own *panchayat*,<sup>4</sup> and to build its own prayer hall of mud and thatch, like the houses around it. Naturally there were problems, some were of the people's own making, and George Swan treated them with 'the levity of love', singing, laughing, scolding, insisting on a daily bath for all!

The Sali villagers were all illiterate, but they kept a few books in their prayer hall for passers-by who might be able to read. They did know some stories from the Gospels, and some songs, and were eager to share what they knew. One day some of them went off to a local fair, taking their books with them; as they sang, they held the books open in their hands as they had seen Swan do. A Brahmin, his curiosity aroused, looked over one man's shoulder. 'Why, your book is upside down!' he said. There was a happy response. 'Oh good! you can *read!* please read to us!' and the Brahmin read the Gospel to an attentive crowd.

Meanwhile, in 1893, another woman missionary had arrived. Katherine Dixon, like Anna Evens, had had previous teaching experience in England, and for the next 20 years she gave herself to the work of the girls' orphanage and school with single-minded devotion. She was fulfilling Rachel Metcalfe's dream of a place where 'good wives and mothers' (and teachers too) were educated in an atmosphere of hard work, good fun, and happy security.

Katherine's coming set Anna Evens free to pursue her own growing interest in the tribal village communities, especially but not only the women. One day she noticed that an iron-worker from another clan had built himself a hut in one of the Christian villages, and she asked him why he had come. 'I feel safer here,' he replied. 'These people sing songs about *Isa Masih* (Jesus the Christ), and the tigers won't come near when they sing those.' But you could easily sing those songs yourself, in your own village,' said Anna. 'That wouldn't do,' he objected. 'If I were to sing them, the tiger would know I wasn't singing from my heart!' A statement, Anna commented, that did much credit both to the tiger and to the iron-worker.

Anna did her best to teach these songs and stories to the women, but they had little confidence in their own ability to learn. 'Our heads are thick,' they would say. 'No one but *you* ever tried to teach *us!*' they would express their affection by their own beautiful gesture, kissing their fingers and gently touching her cheeks. But no, they would *not* let her take their daughters to Katherine Dixon's school in Hoshangabad. Anna argued in



*Ernest and Sarah Munnings,  
with William aged 1 year.*

vain; finally in desperation she picked up a sickle. 'See,' she said with a realistic gesture; 'you may cut my throat, like *this*, if I don't bring them all safely back when the holidays come!' 'Do you care *so* much?' they said. Next morning 18 little girls walked with her by the village tracks to Itarsi railway station. There they not only *saw* a train, they actually boarded one. They must have been a bit scared, for the railway, barely 20 years old, was regarded with awe. The British, people said, worshipped the terrible goddess Kali – did they not put *red* lights by the rails, and on the end of the train? And did not Kali sometimes claim her victims – in 'accidents'? But the children reached Hoshangabad safely; three or four months later they came home, clean, healthy, able to read and tell stories. Proud parents sent them back for more.

During those days Ernest Munnings in Khera was visited by a family of weavers who lived in a village not far away, a village where Munnings had recently given his Gospel message. 'We heard you talk,' they said. 'We have thought about it, we would like to become Christians – but if we did, how could we live?' 'By your trade, of course,' replied Munnings, 'as you have always done.' 'Not in our village, our caste would not allow it,' they said. The family therefore set up their loom on the Khera compound, and soon other families joined them for similar reasons. When the Munnings went on leave in the spring of 1896 George Swan went to live at Khera



*Frederick Sessions.*

in their place, and under his guidance the group became the nucleus of a future weavers' cooperative society.

During these six years Samuel Baker himself, the leader of the mission, was giving much of his attention to two new projects: an industrial school where orphan boys might be trained to earn a living, and a high school where the Christian message might be commended to the cultured classes of Hoshangabad town.

In 1889, along with the first party of new missionaries, came an English Friend named Frederick Sessions, the son-in-law of the FFMA pioneer Russell Jeffrey. Sessions took much interest in the orphans, and knew the importance of preparing the growing boys to earn a livelihood. Baker thoroughly agreed, and the two men talked over ways and means. There was in the town a mechanic named Shiv Dayal, who had the reputation of being able to tackle any job from blacksmithing to watch repairs – and even dentures! Baker had used his services several times, and he was much attracted by Christian teaching. On being consulted, this mechanical genius made a most generous offer: he would contribute the goodwill of his own business and reputation, and for a modest salary train the apprentices himself. Work began at once in a corner of the mission compound; the boys' first big job, it is reported, was to help to repair the town fire engine.

Frederick Sessions himself made the second great contribution. In his own building business in England he was employing Joseph Taylor's brother Alfred, who was a skilled carpenter and plumber. Alfred was interested in the scheme, and he and his wife reached Hoshangabad in the autumn of 1891. They bought a 10-acre plot of land from Rasulia village, then a tiny hamlet with more land than its inhabitants could cultivate.<sup>5</sup> Shiv Dayal and the boys brought their sheds and re-erected them on the north-east corner of the site. A bungalow was built for Alfred and Florence Taylor on the higher ground to the south-west, with a peepul sapling in front of it, a banyan behind, and a lovely view westward down the Narmada valley. The temporary sheds were replaced by a good workshop and office, and Shiv Dayal bought the needed equipment from his old business contacts in Bombay.

In its first year the new 'Industrial Works' employed 18 men and boys as well as its three or four first orphan apprentices. Some were skilled workmen, carpenters, cabinet makers and smiths, selected by Shiv Dayal. They undertook much miscellaneous work, built and repaired *tongas* (pony traps) and soon began to make padlocks. They worked on the usual Indian pattern, from six in the morning to six in the evening, with a two-hour break at noon for a meal and rest. Just before noon they all came together, Hindu, Muslim, Gond, Christian, for 10 minutes' Bible study.



It was a happy group; there were excursions on holidays to the Mrigannath hill across the river, and games of cricket on the old mission compound. Visitors commented on the boys' 'manly and independent bearing, courteous but not cringing'.

During the next few years the business expanded, so that the workforce increased to 40. There were an increasing number of Christian boys, who lived on the Rasulia compound under Florence Taylor's motherly care, and helped to run Sunday schools in the villages nearby, such as Adangarh and Phepartal. Indian standards of excellence in craftsmanship were combined with Quaker standards of business integrity in a very admirable way. Besides much work for the general public the Works accepted a Government order for finger posts for the District roads, and a contract for a new Head Post Office for Hoshangabad, the bricks for which were made on the mission compound at Kharraghat near the river.

The High School project had been mooted in 1887 by the citizens of Hoshangabad themselves. They had come to Samuel Baker and asked if he could provide one as a commemoration of Queen Victoria's jubilee. Baker was eager to do so, but he needed an academically qualified man, and it was not until the end of 1891 that he found one, in Anna's cousin George O'Brien. By that time the government itself had opened a High School on a central site, but O'Brien went ahead and opened a Friends' High School at Kharraghat in 1892. In spite of the distance from the town it made a good start – and then, in 1895, George O'Brien died of small-pox, a great sorrow to the Bakers. His place in the High School was taken by Douglas Maynard, a man with a fresh and vigorous mind. He too could not stay long, but was obliged to withdraw on health grounds after a few years.

Baker himself, in his later 30's, had become a very different person from the impetuous youth who had burst upon Hoshangabad in the early days of 1879. During the years which had followed the painful crisis of 1886 he had been joined by colleagues who were his equals in age, education and experience, and so could argue with him as no one had been able to do during his first period of service: Joseph and Katherine Taylor, the women Anna Evens and Katherine Dixon, Joseph's wise brother Alfred. There were others too, not Quakers; there were Anglicans like Henry and Susan de St Dalmas, and Alfred's witty, fun-loving wife Florence, who teased Samuel in sisterly fashion, as no one had ever dared to do before. He mellowed and matured, and now worked with John Williams without the crippling tensions of earlier years. These men and women, various as they were, were all moved by a genuine devotion which attracted first-rate Indian recruits: Ramcharan, the learned pandit at Sohagpur, the Muslim fakir who joined Friends at Seoni Malwa; Nathulal

and his wife Indu, who had come into the district from further north. Nathulal had been employed on the railway, but had given up his job and his prospects of promotion because he felt 'called of God' to full-time religious service. He and Indu had found their field of service with Friends.

In the company of such fellow-workers Baker no longer mocked at the Indian tradition that cleanliness is part of godliness. On the contrary he supported a fine minute of the Hoshangabad Friends: 'In God's house all people are on an equality. We will hinder no one from sitting among us who comes having bathed and wearing clean clothes.' He was no longer so sure that it was essential for converts to cut themselves off from their social roots. 'I have come to think lately,' he wrote, 'that we may be hindering some by refusing to recognise them until caste is broken.' He came to prefer silence and quiet, meditative prayer to the wordiness of the programmed worship which he himself had introduced in earlier years. He began to reflect with more charity of spirit on the practices which meant so much to his Anglican fellow-workers; present for the first time in his life at a service of baptism, he recognised the spirit of inward dedication. 'Every important doctrine has two sides at least,' he concluded. 'I think of water-baptism and the bread and wine in this way.' And finally, with a wry glance at the limitations of his own education: 'The feeling of personal superiority which a Friend's training engenders(!) may be a hindrance to receiving a blessing through others.'

Baker owed much, in these later years, to George O'Brien and Douglas Maynard. They encouraged him to study, and made him aware of how much the understanding of the Bible might be enriched by the work of such men as Lightfoot and Westcott, bishops though they were. He appreciated the historical realism of their commentaries on Biblical narratives. 'Where should we be,' he once asked, 'without these right reverend scholars?'

Baker also read with great appreciation the life-story of Charles Kingsley, the heir of F. D. Maurice's Christian Socialism. 'He may be unorthodox,' he wrote, 'but he brings God into everyday life in a very refreshing way.' Baker had a strong Quakerly feel for 'God in everyday life', and recognised that economic fair play mattered; he employed a good deal of labour in various ways, and he was a fair employer. He sympathised with Indian complaints of oppressive taxation: 'Why have a salt tax at all? Why not tax tobacco instead?' In this spirit of practical common-sense he and Williams together carried through two useful projects. The first was the provision of Friends' burial grounds in their main stations – Rachel Metcalfe's was the last Quaker interment in the Government ground at Hoshangabad.<sup>6</sup> The second was the purchase of a house at Pachmarhi, in the hills 80 miles south-east of Hoshangabad. 'Lake View' served Friends well, as a holiday retreat in the hottest months, as a pleasant place for a Quaker honeymoon, as a refuge for mothers with young

children during the unhealthy monsoon season. In later years its central position in India, and its lovely surroundings, made it a good venue for country-wide Quaker consultations. The securing of 'Lake View' was a piece of wise foresight.

The 'changing 90's' also saw the first tenuous beginnings of those country-wide Quaker links. In 1890 Samuel and Anna Baker were able at last to accept the Thompsons' invitation to a holiday in Coonoor. There is no record of whether on that holiday they met Annie's sister Eliza Frankland, but sometime during the following year Eliza gave up her work at Panruti and came to help the Friends' schools at Sohagpur. Little is known of her work there, except that she was a lively recruit with ideas of her own, and that she had a good deal of ill health. In 1895 she returned to England with the Williams, but she had not finished with India.

Much more is known about the link with Calcutta. Joseph Taylor was responsible for this, although his many duties and interests in Seoni Malwa prevented him from visiting the Calcutta Friends in person. He corresponded with them, and in 1891 one of them paid an unexpected visit to Hoshangabad – but did not meet him. The following year however Dr Dixon, and another FFMA leader Isaac Sharp, were visiting India under religious concern, and were persuaded, probably by Joseph Taylor, to meet the Calcutta group. Thanks to Isaac Sharp, who recorded much of what they told him, something of their story during the years of isolation can be told.

It is not surprising that a good many of those whom Mackie and May had met in 1862 should have died or fallen away. But in 1890 some of the original leaders, such as Mariano D'Ortez and Alexander de Cruz, were still there, and had been joined by younger men. One of these, S. Pir Baksh, was of Bengali Muslim origin, and had been an attender for many years. He had been employed by the Baptists for writing and translation, and did not apply for Quaker membership till 1883, when he had retired and so was free from what he called 'the silver chains of the mission'. As a Friend he continued to write Bengali pamphlets, presenting the Quaker faith 'in its own oriental dress', saying that discipleship of Jesus did not mean giving up one's native culture.<sup>7</sup>

In 1884 the Meeting admitted another new member, Prabhu Dayal Misra. He was not a Bengali. He had been born in 1847 in a Brahmin Christian family in Delhi, and so was a boy of 10 when Delhi was laid waste in 1857. That shattering experience was followed by another when he was 17. The *pandal* (marquee) erected for an elder brother's wedding suddenly collapsed, and the bridegroom and another brother were both killed. Prabhu Dayal was deeply disturbed by the tragedy and left home to seek peace of soul as a *sannyasi*. Nothing is known of the next 20 years, but by 1884 he had found the peace he sought with Friends. He was still

a *sannyasi*, but spent the four months of each rainy season (when by tradition no travel takes place) with his mother in Calcutta. From there, when the rains were over, he set out on foot towards his own homelands in Upper India, a Christian *sannyasi* like those Gayford had met on his travels in 1873. He carried copies of Pir Baksh's Quaker pamphlets in Hindustani translation. One trace of his passage is to be found in a letter to *The Friend* from an inquirer in Dinapore, Bihar. In 1888 he had found a lively interest in his Quaker message among Christians at Aliahabad, where the Gayfords and Bal Mukand had been before him.

Prabhu Dayal was attracted by the fame of the ageing saint Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and during the rainy season of 1886 he visited him in Calcutta. The saint's disciples were curious that a Christian should be wearing the *sannyasi*'s ochre robe. 'India's ancient symbols and practices of devotion are things I hold in honour,' replied Prabhu Dayal. A long friendly discussion ensued, which Ramakrishna himself brought to an end with a homely parable: 'There is one well of the water of life for all. Hindus draw water at one *ghat* and call it *jala*, Muslims at another and call it *pani*, Christians at a third and call it *water*.' The English word 'water' is used in the Bengali original of this story, and shows how widely Christianity was identified with the foreigner.<sup>8</sup>

Prabhu Dayal was not alone in protesting that Christians were not all 'brown Englishmen' who aped the foreigner. Kalicharan Banerji, the Christian nationalist leader, also protested vigorously.<sup>9</sup> 'Because we are Christians, we do not cease to be Hindus,' he wrote. 'We are Hindu Christians, as much Hindu as Christian.' On the same principle, the Friends in Calcutta were Hindu Quakers. In 1890 however their numbers sank so low that the very survival of the Meeting seemed in doubt. Alexander de Cruz died; Mariano and Cecilia D'Ortez retired to their family home at Chinsurah. Almost immediately however one of Pir Baksh's neighbours joined the group. He was a civil engineer of about 50 years of age named Poornachandra Sarkar, and he had been a 'seeker' for many years. Taught as a child to worship Shiva, he had turned in youth to the Brahmo Samaj and under Keshab Chandra Sen's influence he became an enthusiastic disciple of Christ. He had had a 'western' education and was employed as a Government engineer, and during long years of spiritual loneliness his youthful ardour cooled. Then, during one of his official tours he had had 'an experience of grace', and shortly afterwards, meeting Baksh and his fellow-Quakers, found with them his spiritual home.

Poornachandra's enthusiasm brought in others including his own son, and by the end of 1891 the Meeting had nine adult members, seven or more attenders, and seven children in a Sunday School. It was just then that Prabhu Dayal, encouraged by Joseph Taylor's letters, decided to



include Hoshangabad in his pilgrimage, though it was far to the south and west of his usual route. He arrived unannounced, as *sannyasis* usually do, and found not Taylor but Samuel Baker. Baker had no interest in the Indian tradition of religious pilgrimage, and suspected that Prabhu Dayal might be using the Quaker name to beg for money. When he found that this was not the case, he allowed the traveller to spend two nights with 'a native evangelist'. It was not a happy experience; when Prabhu Dayal returned to Calcutta he reported to the Friends there that their fellow-Quakers in central India 'denied that Hindu sages and saints (such as Sri Ramakrishna) might truly be guided by the Spirit of God'.

Dixon and Sharp, who visited Calcutta shortly afterwards, were among those English Friends who most strongly emphasised 'necessary beliefs'; they were anxious to discover whether the Calcutta Friends were sound 'regarding this cardinal doctrine of redemption through the blood of Jesus'. Baksh and his friends were familiar with this religious language; they did not argue, but tried to present their own experience positively. Isaac Sharp reported that 'they had more to say of the Divine leading than of the blood of Jesus', but he was impressed, especially by Poornachandra who, he said, 'appears to partake of the gentleness of Christ'. He was impressed too 'by their enthusiasm for the Quaker 'peace testimony', especially in its 'social and national' aspects. And yet, in spite of his honest and generous tribute, the contact was not maintained. In view of what was to follow, it seems a tragic failure.

So, in the 1890's, Friends in India sowed much good and varied seed, and the seed was beginning to germinate and grow. But already there were clouds in the air, although the danger was not recognised until the storm burst in full fury in the disastrous famines at the close of the century.

### Notes to Chapter IX

- 1 Description by Mabel Terrell in an article in *Our Missions*, vol.1, 1894, p.103.
- 2 This account is based on that of E.St John Ervine, *God's Soldier: General William Booth*, 1934.
- 3 The Ojhas were closely related to the Gonds. They were musicians and sorcerers, credited with magical powers.
- 4 *Panchayat*: 'council of five', the elders of the village community.
- 5 Rasulia village is on the Hoshangabad-Itarsi road a little over a mile south of the town. Older people told the Friends at the time that in their childhood it had been large and flourishing; it may have been one of the 'deserted' villages in the

Narmada valley mentioned in *The Present Land Tax in India*, 1830, whose plight had moved Joseph Pease.

6 The District Collector told Baker that 'the burial of the unbaptised with the baptised is a sort of outrage on Christian feelings' - though no one in Hoshangabad had objected to the burial of Rachel Metcalfe's body in the Government cemetery. It was, however, too small for the needs of an Indian Christian community.

7 It may have been he who in 1885 encouraged two Bengali Friends to write to the FFMA. Their letter survives, but there is no record of any reply.

8 For this story see *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M' (i.e. Mahendranath Gupta), Madras 1924 (4th edn.), and *Ramakrishna the Great Master* by Swami Saradananda, Mylapore 1920. The two accounts differ slightly in detail.

9 *The Indian Christian Herald*, 22nd February 1883. It should be remembered that at that time the word Hindu still connoted race and culture rather than religious belief.

## CHAPTER X

## The Famine Years – and After

*To make an ordinary trade one's first business, and consecrate it by doing it well, requires a strength, humility and simplicity of devotion of the highest order.*

HERBERT KELLY, QUOTED BY GEORGE SWAN (1901)

AT THE END OF 1892, four American Quaker women, obeying a strong leading to religious service in India, had landed in Bombay. Bishop Thoburn of the Methodist Episcopal Church befriended them, as he had befriended the Salvation Army pioneers 10 years earlier, and sent them to mission stations in north India where they learned Hindi and gained much useful experience. One of them became a regular Methodist Mission worker; the others, like Elkanah Beard 25 years earlier, began to look for an area of Quaker service untouched by any other mission.

Curiously enough their choice fell on Bundelkhand, that area 'west of Allahabad' one of whose rulers had invited the Benares Friends in 1870. One day in Lucknow the three Americans met a British Army chaplain from Nowgong, the small town which was the site of the British Agency for the 24 States of Bundelkhand. Like Sehore in the Bhopal Agency, Nowgong was in the largest of the States, Chhatarpur, and accessible by all-weather Government roads. The women listened eagerly to the chaplain's description, and confided their hopes to him. 'Yes,' he said thoughtfully, 'it may well be the right place for you. It would give you the new field you are seeking, and in the Agency town you would not be completely isolated.' A visit was paid, an empty bungalow rented, and the three women moved in, bag and baggage, on 1st April, 1896.

The leader was Delia Fistler, then about 29 years old, who was already known in her Yearly Meeting as a gifted Quaker minister. She and Esther Baird, a trained nurse in her 35th year, were sponsored by the Ohio Mission Board, which in contrast to the all-male FFMA committee in

London was composed *entirely* of women! Their friend Martha Barber was privately supported.

That night in Nowgong the three simply went to bed. It had been a long hot journey, the last 19 miles of it by bullock cart along the dusty road from the nearest railway station at Harpalpur. Next morning they set to work to put their new home in order. Before they had finished a crowd of about 100 people had gathered on the wide verandah outside. Delia tried to speak to them, to give her religious message, but there was no response in the gaunt faces and lifeless eyes. Bundelkhand was in the grip of famine, after three consecutive years of serious crop failure.

The previous day, as they travelled towards Nowgong, the three had wondered how they should begin their service. Now they knew! Grain was bought, and taken by bullock cart or elephant to village after village. The good news spread fast: there was help to be had in Nowgong. The long streams of the needy increased, the meagre funds were exhausted, it would be 10 weeks at least before the urgent appeal despatched to Ohio could bring a reply, and the Famine Code, drawn up for British India in 1880, did not apply to 'native States'. Supplies were obtained on credit from the Agency's bakery and dairy, and a 'bread and milk class' for starving children was set up. Within a day or two seven friendless little waifs had been taken in, and an old stable cleaned out to receive them. They were Martha's special charge, and the numbers increased.

During the next 18 months over 500 children were received, fed, and passed on to established Christian orphanages, among them those of the British Friends further south. Some parents however pleaded that their children should be kept in Nowgong. 'When times are better,' they said, 'we will take them back.' At the end of 1897, when conditions began to improve, there were 53 who could not be taken back, their parents had not survived. Already, early in that year, Delia had invited an Indian friend to join the team. Charlotte Bai had been a resident of the Women's Home at Lucknow; she was blind but she had the wisdom of experience and a great love of children. Her coming lifted a heavy burden from Martha's shoulders. The children loved and respected her and she taught them the ways of a simple Indian home. Like Katherine Dixon's girls in Hoshangabad they shared the household work, and ground the wheat for their meals; Charlotte's sensitive fingers quickly told her whether the flour was up to standard or not!

In 1897, a few months later, came another welcome helper, Eliza Frankland. Eliza, her health restored, had returned to the Nilgiris in 1896, and was there to help her sister when in March 1897 Philip Thompson died prematurely in his 50th year. Annie took the boys back to England, and Eliza, through the Quaker 'grapevine', heard of the need in Nowgong.

Her coming made it possible for the three Americans, who by then had spent five strenuous years in India, to take leave in turn. Delia went first, at the end of 1897; she told the Board that the mission *must* have its own land and buildings, and that there was no need to wait for some large legacy in order to get them; she could and did raise the money by large numbers of smaller gifts.

A year later Martha went home, not to return, and Delia came back with a new worker to take her place, while Esther Baird went on leave. Delia was troubled; she believed that her 'call' was to 'publish Truth' from village to village – was it right to be tied down to orphanages and schools? Soon however she began to see things in a different light: the children were a trust from God, and if God should call *them* to His service, would they not be able to commend the Gospel to their own people better than any foreigner?

Who were these children? The majority were boys, and many had a moving history.<sup>1</sup> One day in 1896 Delia and Esther had carried grain by elephant over the last difficult miles to a village called Tikar. During the distribution they noticed a dignified woman who waited quietly with her children round her, weak with famine, but *clean*. When her turn came, she asked permission to bring them all to Nowgong. 'No, stay here,' said the Americans, and mounting their elephant started for home, only to find the family waiting for them at the village gate. Again they said No, and on reaching the cart track dismissed their elephant and returned to Nowgong by bullock cart. When they reached their house the mother and children, walking by short cuts, were waiting good-humouredly on the Verandah. Delia and Esther *could* not say no for a third time; they took them in, and little by little they learned the story.

The woman's name was Duoji Bai. Her husband Bodhan had been a prosperous farmer, but years of crop failure brought disaster. All their possessions were sold to buy food, until only a few brass plates remained. Leaving the five children in the empty house, the parents trudged to Nowgong and sold the plates for grain, only to be attacked by robbers as they left the town. Bodhan tried to defend his precious purchases; they killed him and made off. Duoji Bai, weeping and empty handed, stumbled back to her hungry, fatherless children. No wonder she was desperate that day.

Esther had found one little boy of five or six in Nowgong bazaar, emaciated, covered with sores, and with feet so badly deformed that he could scarcely shuffle along. He had come in from the jungle, said the townsfolk; he did not know who he was, just 'Panga', the lame one. Esther took him home; weeks of care were followed by long months in the Agency hospital. When he came back he was still 'the lame one', but he could walk.

Then there was Gorelal. His mother had brought him, a child of five. 'Keep him, feed him,' she had pleaded. 'I will never trouble you again,' they took the child in, and gave the mother money to buy food for herself. 'You won't see her again,' said a man standing by. 'That sort is too proud to beg. She will starve.' However, a year later the mother did come back. 'I know I promised,' she said, 'but I *can't* keep away. Please give me work and let me stay with my boy. I want no money, what he eats, I will eat.' Soon she was helping in the children's kitchen and sharing their life.

One day a child of about seven was found lying at the mission gate in the last stages of exhaustion. He too was lame, and as he slowly recovered strength the missionaries learned his story. His name was Hiralal, his village 60 miles away through the jungles to the north-east. He knew that his lameness unfitted him for the heavy farm labour by which the family lived, and when hard times came he felt uneasy: 'When food is so little the useful ones should have it, not a useless fellow like me. People say there is help in Nowgong.' So Hiralal slipped away from home and set out. For a lame child of seven it must have been a nightmare journey – and he had only *just* survived. The story, with its matter-of-fact heroic unselfishness brought tears to the listeners' eyes.

Famine struck Hoshangabad a little later, and it was not until November 1896 that the Friends there realised how serious the situation was. No one had dreamed that there could be famine in such a favoured district, and there was some delay in bringing the Famine Code into operation. Before it became effective, people were dying of starvation. As in Bundelkhand, Friends concentrated on the 'gaps' in the Government organisation, the special needs of children and other vulnerable groups, such as the 'respectable' people who would rather die than face the 'shame' of public relief, even when it became available. One story echoes that of Duoji Bai:

A rich farmer with plenty of land got into debt during the bad seasons, and sold *everything* to pay his creditors. He and his parents died of famine; his widow and three children were found gathering grass-seed for a meal.

Friends opened emergency 'refuges' at Seoni Malwa and Sohagpur; the orphanages at Hoshangabad were filled to overflowing; the girls' home, built for 50, somehow housed 350. At this crisis help came from the Quaker-Salvation Army links in Bombay and the south. For Alice Weston-Lukey 1895 had been a year of tragedy; she had lost both her husband and her baby. When she had recovered a little from the shock, she came to give Katherine Dixon much-needed help in the girls' orphanage. Edward and Elizabeth Butler came from the south to make their home at Bankheri in the extreme east of the district, and in 1897 applied for and were accepted into membership of the Society of Friends. And at the same time, in 1896, Alfred Smith came back to India to help John Lampard with his work

among the tribes of Balaghat, where famine relief was equally urgent. The young Indian recruit who in 1891 had been so impressed by the sight of Elizabeth Butler at the meeting in Madras, was now, five years later, Captain Jivanandam of the Army's 'garrison' in Gujerat; he came to the rescue of the hard-pressed American Friends in Chhatarpur state, and took 30 or 40 starving and friendless children to be nursed back to health in the Army Home near Ahmedabad; they were so weak that he and his helpers had to carry them in and out of the trains on the long cross-country journey.

In the 'stations' in Hoshangabad district relief was given on a 'food-for-work' basis; wells were dug, water-storage 'tanks' (reservoirs) deepened, a cemetery laid out, and the little Friends Church built at Khera, where other needy weavers joined the little group which Munnings and Swan had organised. An empty house was bought near the Meeting House at Jumerati, Hoshangabad, and filled with destitute women. They spun cotton, hungry weavers wove their yarn into cloth, and the women made the cloth into *kurtas* (shirts) for the orphan children.

One of these 'food-for-work' projects was to improve the narrow lane which led from the railway station on the outskirts of the town to the mission buildings by the river at Kharraghat. The lane was good enough for horses,<sup>2</sup> but for wheeled traffic such as bullock carts and tongas, it was decidedly hazardous. There were stretches where, as Anna Evens put it, 'one wheel has to take the high road and the other the low road'; as a result, her cart had once toppled over, depositing her among her luggage by the roadside. She had watched, helpless with laughter, while the bullocks plodded patiently on, dragging the wheels and axles behind them. Famine labour levelled and widened the road under the direction of young Thomas George, one of the first orphans to be trained at Rasulia.

Another project was organised from Rasulia itself with Government cooperation and approval. This was the building of the 18-foot embankment which now carries the Hoshangabad-Itarsi road across the low marshy ground south of Hoshangabad railway station to the higher ground on which Rasulia village stands. The road here had been submerged in every rainy season, and was often impassable. The work was organised by Nathulal, and employed hundreds of people for nearly five months.

The square, strongly built office of the Industrial Works had inside it a wooden gallery, reached by a hinged stairway which could be raised and lowered at will. Here, says a reliable local tradition, the daily wage of grain was distributed, the stairway being lowered or lifted to regulate the traffic. The small safe once used in that office is still in use. An attempt in 1987 to repair the nest of drawers it contains led to the discovery of a receipt relating to the relief work of 1897. Ninety years later its beautiful Hindi script was still clearly legible, acknowledging payment for the bricks which were used to build the bridge which spans the central water channel below

the new road. During those 90 years there have been some great floods; the water has sometimes reached the top of that 18-foot embankment, but it has never again closed the road. The famine-weakened men and women who dug and carried the thousands of heavy baskets of earth which were needed must have come very wearily to claim their day's wages, but their work has endured.

The Industrial Works themselves were well established before the famine began. By May 1897 about 69,000 people, a quarter of the population of the district, were receiving some form of Government relief, and the Works were called upon to supply the enormous number of tools, water-carts and miscellaneous equipment needed for its many projects. As Alfred Taylor wryly reported, they 'did very well' out of the famine. Nevertheless when it seemed that it was over, at the end of 1897, there was much thankfulness. For a time, harvests were better and hope revived. George Swan, who had gone to England on leave, returned in 1898 and married Alice Weston-Lukey. As they revisited the tribal villages of the Satpura Hills, where George had given so much of himself, they saw them as spiritually 'white to harvest', so open were the people to his Gospel of love and hope.

Before the end of the year however Indian astrologers were predicting an even worse calamity in 1899. Samuel Baker no longer ridiculed their predictions as he had once done. 'Their warnings should not be disregarded,' he wrote. 'We ought to be prepared.' The predictions proved all too accurate, but Baker did not live to say 'I told you so!' He had had much ill-health during the previous years; and though he was a member of the local Famine Relief committee and was constantly consulted he took little active part in the work. But by the end of 1898 he felt so much better that he and Anna resumed the village camping he had always enjoyed so much.

In February 1899 the Rajah of Hoshangabad, the local land-owner, invited them to Bamangaon, 10 miles down the river. They rode there along the village lanes, while servants took tents and equipment by bullock cart. That evening after dark Samuel gave one of his popular 'magic lantern' shows, which of course attracted villagers from miles around. By 10 o'clock it was over and everyone in bed. Samuel woke during the night feeling unwell. Anna's usual remedies gave only partial relief, and shortly before dawn he got up and sat in a chair, hoping that a change of position would help. Anna who was dozing after her wakeful night, was aroused by hearing him fall; she rushed in to him and raised his head, but a few moments later he had died.

One of the servants galloped into Hoshangabad to get help, and call the Civil Surgeon Dr Handley. Friends came at once, and Anna and the children were surrounded by every possible kindness. Dr Handley at first assumed, as she did, that Samuel had died of heart failure, but he did not

feel entirely satisfied, and with Anna's permission he carried out an autopsy which revealed an internal haemorrhage in the lung. 'It looks rather if he had had consumption,' he said. Anna sent Dr Handley's report to her family, along with her own detailed account of Samuel's last hours, and it has been preserved along with his own letters. A modern pathologist has confirmed the doctor's diagnosis:

The most likely cause of haemorrhage in the lung is tuberculosis. This is borne out by the history of Samuel Baker's recurrent fevers. A chronic infection with TB could cause such recurrent fever and ultimately erode a major blood vessel. TB in this chronic form may run a very unspectacular course.

The fact that Samuel had had bouts of low fever during his first weeks in India makes it probable that he had got the infection in Dublin or London.

These details are included because a story soon became current in Hoshangabad that Samuel Baker had been murdered – and it is easy to see how the idea might arise. Hundreds of villagers had watched him giving his lantern show in his usual lively style. How *could* he have died before the next day dawned, unless some one had poisoned him? Well, his hot temper had made him some enemies, everyone knew that! Whispers were repeated until conjecture was accepted as established fact. Anna was not there to contradict them; as soon as possible she had taken her two little boys back to England. The truth lay buried, and nearly 100 years later the legend is still current.

Hot-tempered Samuel Baker undoubtedly was – no one knew it better than himself. But it was not that which was remembered by those who knew him best. His funeral that evening was attended by every family in the Civil Station and all the leading men of the city. Kalidas Choudhury, the Chairman of the Municipal Council, and his Hindu and Muslim colleagues, all paid their tribute to one whom they held in great respect. Charles Gayford's old friend Pandit Govind Ram of Raipur, hearing the news, came to Anna and sat with her in silence, too moved to speak. He had last seen the Bakers at the Bandrabhan *mela*<sup>5</sup> three months earlier. They had met just as the Pandit was leaving for home with his sick daughter, who was lying unconscious in the bullock cart in high fever. Samuel had at once set to work, brought stimulants and smelling salts, got her relatives to massage her hands and feet, and restored her to consciousness. Then he had got medicine and a glass of hot milk. It was the Bakers' glass and so (to the orthodox) 'untouchable', but the Pandit had taken it and held it to the young woman's lips. She had made a good recovery and her father was deeply grateful. 'My own brother could have done no more,' he said.

Such stories show that in practice Baker did not use his medical skills 'only as a means to proselytise'. He acted often as he did then, with sensitive

human sympathy and goodwill. This warmth and kindness won him the affectionate regard of people like the Pandit, whose religious outlook was very different from his. His missionary colleagues, though they did not always fully agree with him, shared the regard and the affection. He had been the unique trained leader (the Bishop, as Florence Taylor loved to call him). Circumstance and ability had combined to make him so.

The fine people, Indian and British, who had been recruited in the 1890's, shared the burden of the terrible years that followed. The Terrells and the Munnings were no longer there, but in 1896 Katherine Dixon's brother-in-law George Clark arrived to take over the Industrial Works and Alfred and Florence Taylor went to Sehore. There, where the Famine Code did not operate, the situation was desperate. Thousands of starving Marwaris from arid Jodhpur were pouring into the little town, where food and water were already in short supply, and they were not welcome. Friends fed about 11,000 people, and helped them forward, whenever possible, into British territory where public relief was available. In the smaller States to the west, where local resources were even more limited it was estimated that one-third of the population perished. Alfred Taylor and George Swan toured the area and reported to London the appalling conditions they had found. Joseph Taylor and his friend John Lampard, who were both in England, at once volunteered to cut short their leave and go to do what they could. They went to the tiny states of Kilchipur and Sunth Rampur, among Bhil tribes in utter misery. They lived among them for months in great personal discomfort, and by their presence persuaded the people to remain in their own homes. They organised a weekly supply of food for each village, and seed corn, and bullocks, if need be, for the winter crop. As soon as the first rains came each family was able to cultivate its own little garden and begin to feed itself. After a few more months they no longer needed any outside help. Their rescuers however were completely exhausted; when the task was done Joseph Taylor had to have a prolonged period of recuperation in England before he could return to Seoni Malwa.

In the Hoshangabad District itself valiant work was done. As before, Friends worked closely with the Government. Honest officials had been much troubled that during the earlier famine 'so much disappeared on its way to the needy', and they asked Friends to assist in the supervision of their own projects. One of these was a soup kitchen near Rasulia, of which George Clark took charge; another was stone-cutting on the rocky outcrop to the southeast. There the indomitable Anna Evens supervised the distribution of cloth to those in greatest need.

There were several sharpers on the Rocks [she reported] who seized the cloth given to the very naked, and sold it. I tried tickets but they copied them, very cleverly. So I got a stencil plate, and stencilled every yard of cloth with the Friends' sign.<sup>6</sup> This made them very

angry, and one afternoon when the servants were away off duty, they came to my house in Jumerati and broke open the door. As they came in I jumped on a table, to keep my head from blows and to see who the ring-leaders were. They raved, but seemed unable to get near enough to hit me. Then a passer-by, seeing the crowd, sent the police.

As in the Bhopal Agency it was the remoter tribal areas which suffered most. In the Satpura hills springs dried up and villages were abandoned. George Swan, now based on Seoni Malwa in Joseph Taylor's place, vigorously set to work to re-kindle hope for the future. Going from village to village he led and persuaded the people to repair and deepen old wells and sink new ones. They knew and loved him and responded. By the early weeks of 1900 he had already got 17 wells going. 'I need my own lime,' he reported, 'from limestone, cow dung and wood – a sort of cooperative system to give some benefit to all.' He set some of the women, for example, to collect the lime nodules from the fields, or to other simple but necessary jobs, and wrote hopefully that he expected 'to start a good many more Gonds and Korkus on the path to life again'. There is no record of how many more were helped, but the need was far beyond his power to meet; many tribal families, in despair, indentured themselves as labourers in the tea-gardens of distant Assam.<sup>7</sup> What one man could do, George Swan did, giving himself so completely that before the end of 1901 he had died exhausted at the age of 31. His last letter from Seoni, received in London after his death, is full of his conviction that 'the path to life' lay through useful, consecrated labour – such as he had encouraged among the weavers of Itarsi and the famine waifs in Seoni. The Seoni boys got such a good local market for their products that in 1899 jealous – possibly less honest dealers had tried to stir up a riot against them, and it had taken George Swan three or four hours of patient argument to calm things down. 'If we want our church to be strong spiritually,' he wrote, 'labour must have a place of honour in it.' His young contemporaries among the missionaries backed him up: let there be gardening, and good mixed farming; let the girls too be brought up as real villagers, and in the occupation of their own caste. He specially looked forward to Joseph Taylor's return to Seoni, knowing that Joseph shared his own dread of creating 'a hot-house community of people called Christians'.<sup>8</sup>

There is one last glimpse of George Swan in the family lore of one of the children he rescued. In 1900 or so a young tribal metal-worker died in the famine; his widow took her two children and set out to seek food and water in the plains. There in the foothills she sank down exhausted, the baby girl at her side, and gasped to the little boy to go for water. The child set off, succeeded in finding a village well and filled his vessel. When he got back he found his mother and sister both lying dead, and stumbled

terrified back to the well and the village beyond it. There George Swan found him, picked him up and took him to the Refuge at Seoni Malwa. The child's name was Kodulal; he grew up to be a respected, sturdily independent Friend.<sup>9</sup> But when George Swan died, nothing remained of the hopeful little Christian villages among the hills, except mounds of earth buried more deeply with each monsoon in the encroaching jungle. Losses were heavy everywhere, and of the 1,500 members and attenders of the Friends churches of 1896 fewer than 700 remained.

When the famines were over there were nearly 800 children of all ages in the Friends' orphanages and refuges, and they accepted over 200 more from the Government's Poor Houses, when all efforts to trace their families had failed. The care of these children was an inescapable and heavy responsibility, but some features of the life of the orphanages aroused much controversy. In 1892 there had appeared a study of Joseph Pease's work for the British India Society in which the author declared that 'no section of the British public now regards famine as a visitation of Divine Providence'. The statement is not entirely accurate; among the varied groups of the 1890's there were some including some Quakers, who did just that. 'May not God be sending the distress,' wrote one Quaker missionary in 1896,

to arouse people from their sins and draw them to the Lord Jesus? . . . one rejoices exceedingly that *by hunger or any means* the seemingly impregnable fortress of caste is being broken down for the Gospel message to find an entrance.<sup>10</sup>

For these Friends, orphanages were an opportunity 'to lift children out of the horrors of heathenism' and bring them up as Christians.

This attitude had never been acceptable to thoughtful people in India. During a famine in 1824 Rammohun Roy had pleaded that religious scruples should be respected in the administration of relief. Years later Syed Ahmed Khan had acted on the same principle. Such men were sensitive to the value of self-respect; it was wrong, they said, to compel people to break laws they held sacred in order to satisfy their hunger. But in the Friends' refuges in Hoshangabad district these scruples were disregarded, with tragic consequences. After the famine was over people came looking for their lost children, recognised them – and turned sorrowfully away; older children went looking for their parents, found them – but were not accepted. Kind motherly Katherine Taylor was haunted all her life by such heart-rending scenes.<sup>11</sup> Did loyalty to Christ demand these cruel choices?

One of their Indian fellow-workers said 'No, it does not demand them'. Pandita Ramabai Medhavi was a Maratha Brahmin whose father had passed on to her his own Sanskrit learning. Then when she was about 18 both her parents had died in the Deccan famine of 1877; she and her brother survived through great privation, she became recognised as



Pandita, and married. More sorrow followed; little more than a year later her husband died, leaving her with an infant daughter. From then on she devoted herself to the care of other lonely women, and especially of child widows. She went to England to improve her English, and then to America, where Quaker women helped her to raise money for the Widows' Home which she opened near Pune in 1887. During these years, after mature reflection, Ramabai had become a Christian, but she retained a great respect for the faith which had sustained her saintly father, and she encouraged every resident of her Widows' Home to keep her own religious law, while she herself led an openly Christian life. Like Kalicharan Banerji she was a 'Hindu Christian', and her position closely resembled that of the 'Hindu Quakers' in Calcutta.

The famines of 1896-1901 did not seriously affect Pune, but Ramabai at once set to work to help sufferers elsewhere. She visited Hoshangabad, Nowgong and Sehore a number of times, took charge of widows and many others, and so relieved the hard-pressed Friends of part of their burden. She took Duojobai's two little girls, Rupiya and Harbi, gave them a good education and sent them back later to Nowgong.

In the Hoshangabad area the controversial practices of the famine refugees aroused suspicion and hostility. During the second famine there were rumours that the 'white sahibs' forcibly abducted children for their orphanages. It is possible that they did not always take enough pains to find out whether the hungry children (and their parents) really wished to accept help on the missionaries' terms.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it was not easy to distinguish these white sahibs from Government officers, persons it was wiser to avoid.

In Bundelkhand things were different. There the missions had begun with famine relief, and this had opened many doors. For years afterwards, when Delia and Esther visited some remote village for the first time, they were recognised and welcomed. 'I know you,' someone would say. 'You are the people who helped us during the famine.' Their little orphanage had grown up because the people themselves had pleaded with them to care for their children. To adults they had given money, or wages for labour, so that they could satisfy hunger without breaking caste laws. They were women, they could not be identified with the 'white sahibs' of the Residency, and in any case the Residency, though powerful, was *not* the Government of the State of Chhatarpur.

In Hoshangabad the cost of the five famine years was heavy. A number of good Government officers died from overwork or disease, and among Friends not only George Swan but Edward Butler also. Henry and Susan de St Dalmas retired, and a number of others had to be invalided home. George Clark and Francis Kilbey, and Alfred Taylor in Sehore, had a heavy burden to carry, even though it was shared by experienced Indians

like Nathulal, Ibrahim and Prem Masih, and by a fine group of English and Indian women, including the two young widows Alice Swan and Elizabeth Butler. There were not enough people to maintain the work and the Mission High School had to be closed. In spite of having lost three Principals in succession – George O'Brien, Douglas Maynard, Edward Butler – it had done a good job and was much missed.

There seems to have been another more subtle cause of weakness. Missionaries who (like Samuel Baker) belonged to the Quaker 'establishment' brought with them an attitude towards 'social inferiors' – who included, for them, the ordinary people of India – which did not expect from them any initiative of their own. Their Meetings for Worship were pre-planned; spontaneous Spirit-guided ministry was a very rare event.

The Americans in Nowgong, on the other hand, had brought with them the democratic traditions of their own country. It is recorded how, among the children in the orphanage, they waited for the Lord 'to choose His own messenger as well as message'.<sup>13</sup> The children responded, and shared in the ministry of their little Meeting. By 1902 the biggest boys, Dalsaiya and Bhagwana, were going out with Delia at their own earnest request to carry the message of Christ to the villages.

By 1901 there were about 40 committed Christians, who formed a Monthly Meeting of the Ohio Yearly Meeting. From the beginning they too took initiatives; in their first two years they arranged for unpaid volunteers to visit each Sunday in eight village centres and give their message to the people. Others like Dalsaiya became full-time 'evangelists' and accompanied Delia on her more distant camping tours. All these leaders were *local* people; by contrast, in Hoshangabad, local people had very little weight, and most of the leaders, like Ibrahim and Nathulal, had originally come into the district from outside.

In other ways the two Friends' missions were very similar. Both groups expected their converts to cut themselves off completely from their original communities and to form a separate Christian church. Both had similar requirements for church membership: evidence of 'change of heart', acceptance of 'necessary' doctrinal beliefs, abstinence from drink and drugs, freedom from debt. Both groups kept to the Quaker practice regarding 'water baptism' and 'the Lord's Supper'.

Both missions found, when the famine ended, that they must provide for similar needs: medical, educational, economic. In meeting these, the British Friends were able to build on the foundations laid during the 20 years preceding the famines; they also had to plan on a larger scale than in Bundelkhand, because they had much greater numbers to deal with.

The first need was for medical care, a need to which the London committee had given no priority until the privations of the famine years brought

increased disease in their train. In 1902 at last they sent a young woman doctor, Hilda Rowntree, who opened a small women's hospital in the Jumerati house which Friends had bought for a famine refuge. She had scarcely done so when the first and worst of a series of outbreaks of plague struck the town. New as she was to India, she turned for advice to the Civil Surgeon. 'If the Government Hospital gave the care *you* do,' he said to her, 'many more lives might be saved.' But in spite of all Hilda's care the plague claimed the lives of 12 members of the little Hoshangabad Meeting, two of the orphan children and the clerk of the Industrial Works.

At such times people from the town were evacuated to the Rasulia compound while the plague-infected rats were destroyed. Anna Evens went with them to help, and young men from the Works willingly volunteered for the risky and unpleasant task of carrying the dead to the burial ground. Sometimes infection was not the only risk.

One young woman died [Anna reported] on the day of the Kali festival, which brings so much riotous drunkenness. The burial ground was on the other side of the town, and the boys hesitated to go without me. I was very tired, but I went with them in my bullock cart, while the boys walked alongside carrying the body. We took a side road to avoid the town, but as we rounded a corner we met a crowd of men, very drunk, with torches and sticks, and their faces reddened in honour of Kali. I shouted, 'Keep back! Keep back! We carry the dead.' They stopped a moment, but then came on again in a menacing way. I stood up behind the driver and shouted again, 'Keep back!' They stopped, then suddenly with a terrible yell they turned and fled. With thankful hearts we went on, and buried our dead.

Next day in the bazaar the boys heard the other version of the story. The men had gone singing in honour of Kali, they said, when a voice commanded them to stop. Then a figure had risen up before them, which grew and grew till it touched the skies, and again ordered them to stop. 'The Goddess is angry with us,' they thought, and fled from her wrath. 'So, Miss Sahiba,' laughed the boys, '*You* are the goddess Kali!'

In 1905 Hilda Rowntree married another newly-appointed Quaker missionary, Henry Robson. Soon afterwards the little hospital was closed, for both she and the nurse who worked with her became seriously ill. The FFMA found a successor in Dr Joseph Robinson. **He was not a Friend;** he belonged to the Independent Methodist Church which had been founded by a group of Friends and Methodists who were dissatisfied with some aspects of their respective traditions. Its members were sometimes called 'singing Quakers', and they were happy to work with the FFMA in foreign missions. When Robinson arrived, Friends began to plan for a hospital at Sohagpur. 'Why not Itarsi?' asked friendly Government

officials. Sohagpur has a Government dispensary already, and Itarsi is growing by leaps and bounds, and has no regular medical help at all.' Friends however were very reluctant to give up their dream of Sohagpur, and the matter dragged on year after year, while they vainly attempted to buy land. Dr Robinson did what he could; he held a dispensary on his verandah, and his wife Jessie won many hearts by her friendliness and her skill with babies. But he was frustrated, and in the end his increasing deafness led him to resign. When Friends at last agreed to go to Itarsi, and accepted the Government offer of land, it was Hilda Robson, restored in health, who opened a small hospital there in 1914.

In Nowgong there was the same kind of need, and Esther Baird the nurse had found much to do from the first. When she returned from leave in 1900, most of her time was spent in building a mission bungalow and orphanage on the 13 acres of good land which the Political Agent had assigned to the mission on the edge of the town. She did however pay regular weekly visits to the railway town, Harpalpur, which was in the territory of Alipura State. There she rented a small house where she and her assistant spent the night and treated all who came. One day the Rajah of Alipura, passing that way in his car, noticed the crowd and stopped to investigate. He was delighted; he at once offered Esther a piece of land and asked her to build a dispensary. She and her colleagues found the money somehow, largely from their own pockets, and at the end of 1903 Dr Abigail Goddard came to join them.

The medical service made a good start, both in Harpalpur and in Nowgong, where a room in the spacious mission bungalow was set apart for the dispensary. The doctor was greatly loved and trusted, and was deeply mourned when she died in 1908 after less than five years' service. William Parsad, who had been the very first orphan to be taken into the stable-refuge in 1896, had begun to work with her in the dispensaries, and Esther now sent him to Agra to be properly trained as a pharmacist. 'By the time my next leave comes,' she thought, 'he will be able to run the dispensaries unaided.' Before he had completed his training, however, she was so ill that she had to go back to America.

The Rajah was distressed. 'You must not leave Harpalpur,' he said. 'If the dispensary must be closed for a time, at least help us to run a good school – I will provide the building.' This was done, and not long afterwards William Parsad returned and **reopened the dispensary.** Plans were drawn up for a little hospital on the Nowgong land in memory of Abigail Goddard, and this was completed and opened in 1913, a few months before the one in Itarsi.

The second need was for education. The Hoshangabad district already had schools; the one at Balaganj was now a Middle School with a teacher training class, and Government inspectors **ranked** it as the best boys'

school in the District. Friends had other schools at Sehore, Seoni, and Sohagpur, with able Indian headmasters, and a rapidly growing Anglo-Vernacular school at Itarsi. The Harpalpur School was of the Anglo-Vernacular type; these schools provided teaching in English as well as Hindi.

For the girls, Katherine Dixon's 'Riverside' was both a home and a school. Classrooms were built on the spot, and as the girls grew some went to Jabalpur to be trained as teachers, others became nurses. All shared the household work, and as in an Indian village home older girls cared for younger ones, and for the orphan babies who were brought from time to time. When the time came they were married to boys from the Seoni orphanage. The missionaries arranged the marriages, and sometimes 10 or a dozen weddings were celebrated together. There must have been difficulties sometimes, but many happy homes were set up. The Nowgong missionaries followed a similar policy, but with their smaller numbers each wedding was a separate event, and as most of their orphans were boys, brides came from outside, including some from Riverside.

Meanwhile the famine refuge at Sohagpur had become a girls' school, and during the following years Christian families from all over the District began to send their daughters there. Classrooms and residential accommodation were built, and the school became a Middle School with a teacher training class. When Katherine Dixon left India in 1913 the few orphans still living at Riverside were also transferred to this school.<sup>14</sup>

In Bundelkhand, before the famine, a girls' school had been unheard of. 'Teach *girls*?' said Nowgong's leading citizens. 'You might as well try teaching cows!' When Eliza Frankland arrived in 1897 she was determined to change this. Tactfully and courteously she met the objections. 'You all know Charlotte Bai,' she would say. 'She is a woman, she is a *blind* woman, and yet she has learned to read, with her fingers. If *she* can learn, why shouldn't your bright little daughters learn?' The citizens allowed her to try, and the school grew and flourished. When Eliza retired at the end of 1902 other women carried it on, first Eva Allen and later Carrie Wood. A Chapel was built in the town in 1904, and the building was used on weekdays for the school, and also housed a small public library.

It was not long before a question of principle arose, both in Nowgong and in Hoshangabad: should 'idolaters' be employed in a Christian school, when Christian teachers were not available? Over the years, differing answers had been given by equally dedicated people. Gayford had regarded 'a-moral' government schooling as *more* harmful than idolatry; Rachel Metcalfe had considered it unjust to dismiss competent Hindu teachers in order to employ Christians; Delia Fistler, like Samuel Baker before her, *did* dismiss a competent and cooperative Hindu teacher, and when the boys' orphanage lost its Christian teacher she sent the boys to the 'a-moral' government High School rather than employ a Hindu.

The third need was economic: to provide orphans and converts with a means of livelihood. The Industrial Works at Rasulia, and the weavers' colony at Khera, had been started before the famines, and Joseph Taylor and George Swan had from the beginning set the boys in Seoni Malwa to useful trades. The Industrial Works was kept very busy throughout the famine period, but the report which covers that period, 1895-1902, raises a number of tantalising questions:

The loss over the whole period after deductions for depreciation have been made, is Rs. 1672, about £14 a year. There have been four changes of Superintendent and two famines, the responsible Hindu foreman and the book-keeper have been dismissed for dishonesty, the Superintendent's time is taken up by building work away from home, a full set of steam-driven machinery has been installed by untrained lads – so that we are surprised to find the loss so small. We think there has been too much tendency to indulge in experiments, and in bricks and mortar. If the Superintendent is relieved of outside work there is hope of reasonable profit. A prospect of regular government orders has been secured, and the outlook has never been so bright.

So, Shiv Dayal, to whom the enterprise owed its very existence, was dismissed. Was the charge of dishonesty justified? If so, were he and his book-keeper exposed too long to the temptations and threats which caused government relief materials to 'disappear'? The only 'indulgence in bricks and mortar', apart from mission buildings, was the contract for the Head Post Office at Hoshangabad, undertaken in 1898 – a building which served the town well for about 80 years. One of the 'experiments' was a piece of simple, useful technology, the design of a hand-operated winnower which enabled farmers to separate the chaff from the grain without waiting for the wind to do the job. It secured 'regular government orders', and when the Works were finally closed some of the former employees began making winnowers in Hoshangabad, where they are still being produced for a steady local demand.

Another simple successful invention was the fly-shuttle loom designed by George Clark, who was a skilled and creative carpenter. It was first used by Christian weavers at Seoni Malwa, and quickly adopted by the Khera weavers also. In 1908, when there was a big exhibition at Nagpur, the Works won a medal for it, and a Seoni boy got a prize for his demonstration of weaving. The winnower won another medal, the household furniture a third. Cabinet-making was of a high standard, and the Central Government itself placed orders for 'camp furniture', light but tough, when royal visitors had to be entertained on organised hunting expeditions and the like.

The quality of training is excellent,' wrote a visitor. 'There is exactness, thoroughness and honesty. The boys are eager to learn and the night-school is well attended.' Life nevertheless was not all study and hard work, either for them or for Katherine Dixon's girls, many of whom became expert swimmers in the great river on whose high banks they lived. There were picnics and excursions for all. The apprentices at Rasulia were admitted at half-price to the Indian Recreation Club in Hoshangabad, where they played hockey and cricket with all sorts of people. One of the leaders of the Club was Dr Johory, who had become a Christian in Seoni Malwa, and he persuaded the committee *not* to plan matches on Sundays! In Rasulia itself the atmosphere was relaxed; 'an aged Hindu devotee' had found himself a little shelter there. He was allowed to stay, and work as he could, and so to earn enough for his very simple needs.

Yet, in the Works as in the schools, fundamental questions remained unanswered. Their aim was now stated to be 'to assist the mission – profitable business is secondary'. An ambiguous statement. The Works had been founded to nurture an independent, self-reliant, Christian community, and for that purpose 'profitable business' was *not* secondary. The tendency however was to interpret 'assisting the mission' as meaning to provide the workforce to carry out whatever jobs the missionaries wanted done. The Works were told *not* to submit tenders for 'outside' jobs, or to accept more than a limited number of 'outside' orders, lest these should interfere with 'mission' work. The orphan apprentices were required to 'serve the mission' for three years after their training was completed. Ambiguity again, but the impression is that they were *not* envisaged as independent craftsmen who would give mission orders priority when needed. The development of self-reliant independence was no longer the first consideration. Kodulal, that son of a village craftsman whom George Swan had rescued, had his apprenticeship abruptly terminated because a missionary happened to need a domestic servant and took a fancy to him.

The 'steam-driven machinery' referred to in the report is another sign of the same tendency. Shiv Dayal had trained his apprentices to use the indigenous hand tools with which the independent craftsmen earned his living; but the young men trained on the machines could make their living only in factories and workshops, and they found work on the railways in Bombay, or in the mills and ordnance factory in Jabalpur.<sup>15</sup> They did *not* remain to strengthen the Friends church in the Hoshangabad District.

From this point of view 'regular government orders' were another doubtful blessing. They poured in for a time; furniture, doors and windows were needed for the new stations on the expanding railways. Pressure to fulfil these contracts, in addition to the pressure to 'assist the mission', resulted in failure to cultivate the natural local market, the small individual orders by which the individual craftsman lives.

Moreover machinery needs maintenance and did not always receive it. Chhotu, the workman in charge of the engine room, was diligent and faithful, a saintly character who exercised a great personal influence for good, but 'he knew nothing about machinery except that it needed oiling'. There were long delays and costly mistakes in setting up the unfamiliar machines; on at least one occasion the government cancelled an order because a consignment was not up to standard.

The small-scale enterprises at Seoni were modestly successful. A few boys were taught carpentry by a young craftsman trained at Rasulia in pre-machinery days; others learned tinsmithing, others tailoring. Francis and Mary Ann Kilbey, who had both once earned their living in the shoe-making trade in England, taught some others these skills. The work done in Nowgong was very similar to this. There were 14 boys whose aptitudes were practical rather than scholarly, and the versatile, practical Esther Baird got them trained in a variety of skills: gardening, blacksmithing, masonry, shoemaking, tailoring. They were soon able to undertake much useful work, both in the mission and outside.

We want our boys [wrote Esther] to serve the Master as trained workmen, able to teach poor village converts how to earn an honest living with their hands.

The British Friends, with something like 500 boy orphans to provide for, turned to the basic resources, the land. Many of the boys brought to Seoni during the famines were Gonds or Karkus from the densely forested hills to the south. Some of them, as soon as they felt strong enough, ran away – back to their familiar life. The Friends planned to settle more of these boys in surroundings familiar to them, and in 1902-3 with government cooperation they acquired a thousand acres of land at a village called Lahi, where the boys might practise seasonal cultivation as other tribals did, and supplement their income by casual labour for the Forest Department. Simple buildings were erected on a lovely site overlooking a little river, and a group of boys went to live there with Thomas George in charge. But the scheme was not a success, partly because Thomas George, brought up from childhood in Hoshangabad town, had no farming experience and no knowledge of the hills.

At this juncture came a recruit, Alfred Smith, who all through the famine years had been John Lampard's right-hand man in his mission to the Gonds. In 1905 plans were being made to hand that mission over to the American Methodists,<sup>16</sup> and Friends welcomed Alfred to Lahi, which at once became a happier place. Alfred very soon was everyone's beloved 'Uncle', but he could not overcome the basic difficulty, the widespread 'Christian' prejudice against village life.

## Notes to Chapter X

- 1 Letters in *Friends Oriental News*, Swarthmore College Historical Library, Pennsylvania, USA.
- 2 Samuel Baker, it is said, would sit writing his English mail till he heard from his bungalow the rumble of the Bombay-bound mail train on the first span of the river bridge, then as now about ten at night. Then he would leap on his waiting horse, gallop to the station, and thrust his letters into the mailbox on the train.
- 3 The present writer was a party to this discovery.
- 4 Dr Dorothy Rule heard the legend while working at Rasulia in the 1970s. The pathologist quoted is her friend.
- 5 Bandrabhan stands at the confluence of the Narmada and its great tributary the Tawa. There is a bathing festival at the time of the November full moon.
- 6 Was this 'sign', one wonders, the red and black star?
- 7 Years later a few came home again. Anna Evens met them and found that they still remembered Gospel stories they had learned from George Swan.
- 8 Letter quoted in *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, April 1902, vol.36 p.234.
- 9 Story related by Kodulal's son Titus and recorded by P.C.Aggarwal, Rasulia.
- 10 Quoted in Caroline Pumphrey, *Samuel Baker of Hoshangabad*, 1900, p.160. [The missionary was Ellen Nainby. I have not discovered the second part of the quotation.]
- 11 See the record of the interview with Mahatma Gandhi, 1930 (Friends House Library).
- 12 Shanti Edwards, now a senior Friend at Seoni Malwa, records a story told by her father, a Gond: One day in his childhood he and some older boys heard missionaries coming along the road. All the others ran away; the child, who could not run quickly, climbed a tree. A missionary saw him, coaxed him down and took him to an orphanage. It was years before he saw his family again.
- 13 Merrill M.Coffin, *Friends in Bundelkhand, India*, Mysore, 1926, p.18.
- 14 There was no link, as is sometimes claimed, between this school and Harriet Gayford's little day-school, which had been followed by others.
- 15 Indian Friends did not object to work in the ordnance factory; the testimony against the use of 'outward weapons' was not real to them. When asked in a Scripture test 'Should Christians fight?' two boys replied 'Yes! we should put on the whole armour of God and fight our great Enemy!' That inward war was real.
- 16 The transaction was completed in 1906. John Lampard's subsequent history is not known. Possibly he went to the USA as a Salvation Army 'rumour' says.

## CHAPTER XI

### Families and Friends : 1883

*Quakers have a tradition of extraordinary potency  
handed on in families*

NICOLETTE DEVAS, *SUSANNAH'S NIGHTINGALES*

THE QUAKERS whose work was described in the last two chapters had come to India primarily to share a religious experience. During the same period were other Quakers in India who were following in John Bright's footsteps, and like Martin Wood before them were concerned for justice and mercy in public affairs. Many of them, like the Indians with whom they worked, gave their service through education.

The first of these to reach India was Theodore Beck. He was Samuel Baker's near-contemporary, and when Baker was beginning his work at Hoshangabad he was one of the group of Cambridge Quaker students, led by John William Graham, who were trying to restate their faith in terms compatible with historical and scientific scholarship. He had a brilliant mind, and no use for unexamined ideas. 'When he wants to abuse a thing,' wrote his friend Walter Raleigh, 'he always calls it *doctrinaire*.'<sup>1</sup>

The Beck family lived in the village of Stoke Newington on the northern fringe of London, where they worshipped, and intermarried, with other remarkable Quaker families, Allens, Foxes, Listers. Theodore's mother was an Allen. His father Joseph Beck was a maker of optical instruments; he was also a member of the Anti-Slavery Society and Treasurer of the Friends War Victims Relief Committee during the Franco-Prussian War. People of all sorts were made welcome in their home – Americans, for example, from *both* sides of the Civil War. There were other doings, very interesting to a growing boy; Joseph Beck designed and rode his own bicycle; along with Theodore's youngest uncle he successfully climbed Mt Blanc; he practised home conjuring, he set up a telescope on the roof to study the stars. Theodore soon showed a similar versatility. He was 'the

jolliest and best of elder brothers', and gave the younger ones great fun in home theatricals. As he grew older he haunted the Zoo, bought birds in the London market and set up an aviary on the roof. He had a good Quaker schooling, and by the time he was 20, in 1879, he had completed a course at University College London, and won a gold medal for biology and a scholarship at Trinity College Cambridge. There he showed himself a fine mathematician, but 'just missed being a Wrangler because he refused to conform to routine and worked in his own way'.<sup>2</sup>

Four years later, at the end of 1883, Beck landed in India. The circumstances which brought him arose from the consequences of the insurrection of 1857, especially as they affected two of Martin Wood's contemporaries, Joseph Hume's son Alan Octavian, and Syed Ahmed Khan. A. O. Hume, like Martin Wood, had been inspired as a boy by the 'Corn Law poet' Ebenezer Elliott, but while Wood was still a grocer's apprentice in Yorkshire, Hume had already entered East India Company service. Syed Ahmed Khan also entered the service, in Delhi where his ancestors had served the Mogul Emperors. He was a Muslim of the highest rank – the title Syed connotes a descendant of the Prophet. He and Hume knew and respected one another; both had held positions of responsibility in northern districts, and had won the goodwill of the people; the Syed was able in 1857 to save a number of English lives. But for him the revolt ended in tragedy; his own city of Delhi suffered the full fury of British reprisals. For almost a generation it lay desolate, its cultural and intellectual life blotted out.

Hume and Ahmed Khan were both distressed by the intensified British arrogance which followed. Like Bright in England and Wood in Bombay they pleaded that the Government should allay the people's fears and redress their just grievances, and when this did not happen both men resigned from service. Hume devoted himself to organising enlightened Indian opinion in what was to become the Indian National Congress, and Ahmed Khan turned to education.

He did this because of the new insistence on the use of the English language for all administrative business. Previously, over large areas of northern India, the Company's affairs had been conducted in the personal style and Persian language of the Mogul court. Ahmed Khan was himself in many ways the heir of the spirit and outlook of Rammohun Roy; he was a cosmopolitan, at home in both languages. So were other Muslim leaders in Calcutta and Bombay. Many of their fellow-Muslims however regarded the use of English as 'little less than embracing Christianity'. The Syed realised that if they persisted in this attitude they would have no place in public affairs, and he set himself to change it. The Muslim Anglo-Oriental College was opened at Aligarh in 1875, and in

spite of its name it offered an English education not only to Muslims but to the many Rajput families of the region who had once served the Mogul Court.

Some years earlier the Syed had sent his own son Mahmud to the Government College at Benares, and in 1869 the young man had won a scholarship to Cambridge. His father had accompanied him, and had been favourably impressed by the English university. Fourteen years later, when he needed a new Principal for Aligarh, he sent Mahmud back to Cambridge to find one. Mahmud returned with Beck, whom he had found through his father's connections. Sir John Strachey, Governor of the Province, had known Ahmed Khan for years and took a friendly interest in his College, and he gave Mahmud an introduction to his son Arthur, then a Cambridge student. Arthur knew Theodore Beck; they were both members of the 'Apostles',<sup>3</sup> the famous Cambridge society founded by F. D. Maurice, for 'the pursuit of Truth with absolute candour by a group of intimate friends'. It was full of the spirit of 'candid, uncompromising youth, where speculation is a passion made profound by love'.<sup>4</sup> The leader in Beck's day was the great Henry Sidgwick, and it says much for Beck's quality that he should have been elected. He was well-known in University life, and in 1882 had been President of the Union.

At first Beck had almost refused Mahmud's invitation. He had very deep family affections and did not want 'to break from all he cared for'. But his father, whose adventurous spirit he shared, urged him to accept; after all, the plan to create an Indian counterpart of a Cambridge college offered an exciting prospect. During that summer of 1883 the Cambridge historian J. R. Seeley had published his book *The Expansion of England*, in which he pointed out that in exploiting India as 'a mere colony', 'good and bad had been destroyed together'. India, he said, should be treated as an equal partner, helping to build up a commonwealth of nations which, in future might become worldwide. An Indian college, thought Beck, might help to create that equal partnership.

Some shocks awaited him. The ship on which he and Mahmud travelled to India was full of Anglo-Indians who were furious opponents of the Ilbert Bill. In Aligarh fanatical Muslims were threatening the Syed with death, and regarded the newcomer as a Government spy. Even some of his fellow-teachers were suspicious of his friendliness towards the students, and wanted him to confine himself to getting good results in Allahabad University examinations. 'They object,' he wrote to his family, 'to my jokes (which I cannot restrain), my affectionate relationships, my casual disposition.'

The young Apostle persisted with Ahmed Khan's backing. He treated his students as equals and friends, something they had not expected from



an Englishman. He went walks with them, encouraged their enthusiasm for cricket, cared for them in sickness, enchanted them with his witty talk. His unassuming modesty won the day.

Outside the College there was much to admire. 'I have seen nothing in India,' runs an early letter, 'so devoid of art, beauty and good manners as the East End of London.' He saw one of the College cooks sitting reading the *Ramayana*: 'One wouldn't find many *English* cooks reading *Paradise Lost*!' He delighted in the pageantry of the Rajput chiefs; he began, on occasion, to wear Indian dress himself.

'Casual' Beck might be, but he was firm on principle. In 1885 he told the Syed that he would resign if a certain grossly insubordinate student were not expelled. The Syed agreed, but the decision alienated an influential supporter. From then on the College relied on its own merits, not on personal pressure, to bring students. Then Beck revisited England and returned with two recruits – his friend and fellow-Apostle Walter Raleigh and another young Cambridge man Harold Cox. Once more the suspicious of the 'orthodox' were around when, with the Syed's backing, they introduced such 'Christian' influences as tables and chairs, knives and forks, into the College dining room. But by 1886 there was a Fellows' Table, where staff and senior students sat together for meals on equal terms. The three young Englishmen, working hard in term time, spent their vacations exploring India. On one occasion, they reported, they 'ventured on a river full of rapids'. The only Indian river which fits that description is the Narmada, far to the south. Had they travelled through the Rajput States of Bundelkhand, and the enlightened Muslim-ruled Bhopal, and did they go further, to the southern Muslim State of Hyderabad, where another Cambridge Friend had arrived in 1886? Aligarh was developing increasingly friendly contacts with all of these.

During the next few years Beck was able to persuade the College Trustees to accept a new constitution, with more power for the Principal and safeguards against the risks of personal pressure in College affairs. He also joined with others in attempts to reform Allahabad University. His students' academic results had not yet been very good, partly because of the difference between his own standards of excellence and those of Allahabad. If only, he thought, there might be an Apostles' Club *there*! He set a high value on the less formal aspects of education. There was a College Union, whose debates were modelled on those of the Cambridge Union of which he had once been President. The students grew in confidence, and organised other activities on their own initiative. One of these was a club called 'The Duty' which set to work to raise money for bursaries for the poorer students. Some of its ways of doing so, such as running a canteen for Ahmed Khan's conferences, involved work which these boys

would formerly have left to their servants! As the years went by there grew up an 'Aligarh image': an Aligarh man would be reliable and practical; he would be ready to put the wider public interest before the narrower claims of family 'self-seeking' or social and religious prejudice. It was a fine achievement.

The emphasis on the public interest was timely. In 1880 Martin Wood, in *The Bombay Review*, had roundly condemned the 'narrow fanaticism' of street preaching in Bombay, by Christian, Hindu and Muslim alike. The Syed whole-heartedly supported him. He pointed out that the Hindu opposition to 'cow-slaughter' (directed originally against the beef-eating British) had merely *increased* the number of cows killed by Muslims: 'An appeal to Muslim goodwill would have been much more effective.' At the same time he told his fellow-Muslims that it was 'cantankerous folly' to kill cows just to annoy the Hindus. 'His heart,' wrote Dadabhai Naoroji, 'was in the welfare of India as one nation.' As he remarked, 'I have often said that India is like a bride whose two eyes are the Hindus and the Mahomedans'.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the change to a wholly western-type, English-based administration caused a great deal of heartburning in the regions where Aligarh stood. The old Muslim and Rajput aristocracy saw themselves ousted by people they regarded as 'up-start nobodies', 'downtrodden Hindu Bengalis'. Bengalis had learned very quickly as Penney had foreseen in the 1820's, that English education was 'a medium to wealth', and they staffed the administration, the law-courts and the high schools in every District town. When the British residents of Calcutta started their lawless agitation against the Ilbert Bill it was the numerous Bengali District officials who were most directly affected, and who felt insulted by the wrecking of the Bill. They at once started 'vehement public demonstrations', demanding that Indian members of the Provincial Councils should be chosen by public election. The Syed could not approve either their methods or their aims; agitation was *not* 'the best way of submitting arguments', he said, and amidst the preaching of sectarian fanaticism 'the people's judgment of the common welfare is clouded', so that they could not vote calmly or fairly.<sup>6</sup>

The Syed's old friend A. O. Hume was equally concerned for 'the welfare of India as one nation', and in the planning of the Indian National Congress he called for 'India-wide action on the social plane' to combat the sectarian factions. But his appeal for support to the graduates of Calcutta University meant that when the Congress came into being in 1885 'Hindu Bengalis', with their belief in political agitation, had a place in it. The Syed therefore refused to join either the Congress or the National Mahomedan Association formed in Calcutta – they were both 'too political'. Instead, he founded the Mahomedan *Educational* Conference,

which held its first session in Aligarh in 1886. By the end of 1887 however, when the Conference met at Lucknow, Ahmed Khan used the occasion for a *political* attack on 'the Bengali movement', and accused the Congress of making 'false statements' to the British press and members of Parliament. It was tragic estrangement; as years went on unfair invective was used on both sides; *any* criticism of Government became 'Bengali-style sedition', *any* criticism of Congress the work of 'fossils and time-servers'.

As for Theodore Beck, he was neither a fossil nor a time-server, nor was he a seditionist. Like Hume and Wood (who had become a member of the Congress support-committee in London) he could be very critical of Government, which in his view 'did *nothing* to appeal to the popular imagination', and he agreed with them that 'a great reform is needed'. But Hume and Wood believed that 'John Bull cannot be moved without a clamour', and so did their best to make one; Beck advocated another, perhaps more Quakerly approach. 'Reform,' he wrote, 'can be brought about only by an appeal to the nobler side of the English character, *not* by stirring up feelings of resentment.'

In the Mahommedan Anglo-Oriental College itself there was *no* anti-Hindu or even anti-Bengali feeling. With Beck as Principal no one, staff or student, had cause to complain of any discrimination. A Muslim poet, Hali, visited the College. 'If one has not seen the picture of affection and discipline,' he wrote,

let him come here and see Beck and his students conversing with one another, let him come here and see Hindus and Muslims as one soul in two bodies.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most trusted and respected teachers was a Bengali, Prof. J. C. Chakravarty, whom Beck appointed in 1888, and who later became Registrar of the College. The numbers increased rapidly until there were between 500 and 600 students, a considerable number of whom were Hindus. This was proof of a popularity which was partly the result of good examination results, but Beck saw the danger of relying on these:

Examination results are not the best criterion. More important is the moral and intellectual tone, and this is threatened by students who enter the College classes without going through the school, and so don't know the traditions.

These strenuous years were lightened by happy personal events. In 1888 Joseph Beck came to visit his son, bringing his wife and eldest daughter Jessie, who had been Theodore's closest friend and playmate from their early childhood. When the parents returned home Joseph characteristically celebrated the occasion by wearing a fez to Stoke Newington

Meeting! But Jessie stayed on in Aligarh, with much benefit to her brother's domestic arrangements. Vacation excursions continued; on one of them Theodore met a congenial compatriot, Frederick Hickson, who was working for a British business firm, but somewhat reluctantly, for his *real* interests were music and teaching; it was his family who had insisted on a business career. Beck was attracted too by his attitude to India; Hickson had been profoundly impressed by hearing Canon Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall,<sup>8</sup> preach in Delhi from the text: 'I am among you as he that serveth,' and apply it to the British in India. Finding that Hickson was about to go on leave, and that his home was not far from Stoke Newington, Beck gave him an introduction to his family. When Hickson returned, he was engaged to be married to Theodore's next sister Lizzie. In December 1890 they were married at Aligarh, with Jessie acting as bridesmaid. It was a Quaker wedding in form and spirit, though the Becks were the only Friends present.<sup>9</sup> Theodore's Quaker faith was real to him; when, in his friendly personal intercourse with his students the talk turned to religion, he would lend them a precious book, *The Imitation of Christ*.

In 1891 Joseph Beck died, and Theodore went to visit his bereaved mother, taking Jessie back with him. When he returned at the end of the year he had been married to another Jessie, the sister of his old friend Walter Raleigh. They had a great welcome in Aligarh, where a new boarding house for students was soon to bear Joseph Beck's name.

During the years that followed clouds began to gather. There were some puzzling incidents: the Aligarh Students Union was forbidden to debate political themes, and pro-Congress newspapers were excluded from the College reading-room – a ban which, of course, only made the forbidden fruit more attractive! It is difficult to imagine how a man of Beck's background and character came to impose such restrictions. A possible guess – it is no more – is that they emanated from the ageing Ahmed Khan, and that Beck, who described himself as the Syed's 'humble disciple in matters political', loyally complied. Loyalty stood high in his scale of values; for him, to be a Friend meant a striving to be *loyal* to the teachings of Jesus.

All Beck's loyalty and compassion were called out in 1895, when the old man made the heart-breaking discovery that a trusted employee had for years been practising large-scale embezzlement of College funds. Public confidence was shaken, and the famine of 1896-7 added to the difficulties. Student enrolment fell to less than one-third of what it had been, and when Syed Ahmed Khan died, in March 1898, the very existence of the College he had nurtured was in jeopardy. Beck saved it. He at once launched an appeal for a Memorial Fund, to realise the noble dream which the Syed had cherished from the earliest days: 'that the college may expand

into a University, whose sons shall preach the Gospel of free inquiry, large-hearted toleration, pure morality.<sup>10</sup> There was a generous response, and an enthusiastic endorsement of the vision by a great meeting of the Muslim Educational Conference at Lahore. It would be over 20 years before the Aligarh Muslim University came into existence, but the College was saved.

From 1895 onwards Beck had carried a very great burden. When the crash came, he had himself taken charge of the College finances, acting as Registrar as well as Principal, and refusing to draw any salary as long as the crisis lasted. The pressures of those years, followed by the battle to save the College, proved too great a strain. In the spring of 1899 he joined Jessie in Simla, where she had gone for the birth of their first baby. A daughter was born and named and rejoiced in, but eight weeks later her father had died exhausted in his 40th year. The grave in the Simla churchyard is fashioned of the same red brick as the College he had served, and the Persian inscription it bears was in all likelihood chosen by his colleagues:

Man lays stone on stone and calls it, my house.  
Neither mine nor thine,  
Only a place of shelter for the birds to pass the night.

The Friend who came to Hyderabad in 1886 was Philip Henry Sturge, whose grandfather was a cousin of that Joseph Sturge who had taken up the cause of the slaves in the 1830's. Philip himself had been one of the Cambridge Quaker group, studied under J. R. Seeley, took a brilliant degree in history, and then accepted a position as private secretary to a highly-placed Hyderabad official. Whether or not Beck had any hand in this appointment, he was almost certainly consulted about the plans which Sturge and some of his Hyderabad friends were making during the following year to up-grade a pioneer school, the Madrasa-i-Aliya, into a 'Nizam's College'. By 1890 Sturge was Vice-Principal of the College, which he served for the next 28 years. It was he who, after he had become Principal, secured the pleasant site the College still occupies. It had close links with Aligarh, which it strongly resembled. It attracted a similar type of student, for aristocratic families from many formerly independent States such as Oudh, had migrated to Hyderabad when the territories came under British control. Like the Aligarh college it was open to students of any religious community.

Philip Sturge was a great teacher, vividly remembered not only by his students, but even by the little boys who met him casually in the street, some of whom still recall his very jokes.<sup>11</sup> One who was first his student and later his colleague treasured into old age the personal testimonial which Sturge had given him. Gentle, even-tempered, a good scholar, a lover of literature (and of cricket!), with a serious manner shot through with gleams of boyish fun – and one who never allowed his increasing

deafness to sour his humanity: this is the word-portrait that remains. The tributes paid to him when the news of his death reached the College speak of his integrity, his devotion to its welfare: 'Students trusted and respected him, colleagues were happy to work with him, officials recognised in him a loyal servant of the State.'<sup>12</sup> His facility in light verse and humorous drawing must have delighted his Hyderabad students as much as it charmed his little nephew in England during the few years of his retirement. His Cambridge fellow-student John William Graham, who visited India in 1927, was given a specially warm welcome in Hyderabad for the sake of the beloved Philip Sturge.

Meanwhile other members of Beck's 'extending family' – members by birth, by marriage, by 'adoption' – had also been drawn to Aligarh. One of them was Theodore Morison, who was already in Bundelkhand (possibly by Beck's own doing) as tutor to one of the young princes. He joined the College in 1889 and 10 years later succeeded Beck as Principal. There are other hints of how intimate Beck's contacts with these Rajput states had become. In the early 1890's his youngest brother Horace – perhaps of all the family the one most closely resembling him in brilliance and versatility – came for a long visit, part of which he spent with a young, Oxford-educated Prince. 'You know, my dear Beck,' the Hindu Rajah would say, 'being my people's god isn't all beer and skittles!' There speaks a man who, like the Begum Sahiba of Bhopal, took his duties seriously beneath all his flippant phrasing. One wonders how far the warm friendliness some of these rulers experienced from the Beck family contributed to their own friendliness towards the American Friend missionaries in later years.

Another recruit was Thomas W. Arnold, who replaced Walter Raleigh when ill-health compelled the latter to resign in 1887, and who in 1892 married Frederick Hickson's sister Mary and so joined 'the family'. In 1897 he moved on to the Oriental College in Lahore – perhaps partly because, generously unselfish as he was, he wished to relieve the College of part of its financial burden. An Arabic scholar and a serious student of Islam, he spent his later years first at the India Office Library and then, in the 1920's, as Professor of Arabic at the new London School of Oriental Studies. Like Philip Sturge he loved being among students, sharing his knowledge generously, with gaiety and good humour. For many years he was a popular 'educational adviser' to Indian students in London.

Theodore's sister Jessie devoted herself to a similar service after she returned to England in 1891. There was a flourishing National Indian Association, started after Keshab Chendra Sen visited Britain in 1870, which worked 'to extend the knowledge of India', and stressed especially educational and social topics, such as the position of women. Jessie joined the staff, and soon became Honorary Secretary and busy with an Indian

Students Union and Hostel. She so distinguished herself that she received the first-class Kaiser-i-Hind medal at the King's *Durbar* in 1911.

Yet another younger sister, Hannah, was also drawn to Aligarh, although not until years later. Theodore, keen as he was to nurture a 'feeder' school for the College, had planned for a boarding house for the younger schoolboys, but during the years of financial crisis it was not possible to build it. Hannah, who though unmarried was known as 'a genial mother of little boys', would have been the ideal matron, but by the time the house was ready, in 1901, she had suffered a severe bout of rheumatic fever and had accepted similar work in Canada. When the first Aligarh matron retired in 1915 Hannah took her place, and spent there the years of the First World War. Her sister Lizzie's eldest son Eric Hickson, now a newly-qualified young doctor, was posted to India in the Army Medical Corps and visited her. Other visitors she entertained were the Begum Sahiba of Bhopal and the Nizam of Hyderabad; Aligarh's links with the princely states were still close. But during the year following the war India was restless and unhappy; she and another English member of staff went to another school in Burma, much to the regret no doubt of the little Aligarh boys who missed their 'genial' Quaker mother.

Theodore Beck drew two other family recruits to India, sons of his mother's brothers and so his own younger cousins. One of them, Percy Stafford Allen, spent five years in the educational service at the Government College, Lahore. But he was essentially a scholar; instead of remaining in India he became a distinguished exponent of Erasmus at Oxford. The other cousin, Basil Copleston Allen, joined the Indian Civil Service and spent 30 years in administration work mainly in Assam. He developed a great interest in the tribal peoples of the region, especially the Nagas and the Khasis, and also in the Indian religious tradition of the *sadhu* – an interest that would be followed up, just as he himself was leaving India, by a distant cousin, another scion of the Stoke Newington Allen family.

As for Frederick and Lizzie Hickson, their contribution may well have been the most widely influential of all, though it is the most difficult to pin down. They spent the first four years or more of their marriage in **Calcutta where two children were born. Then they were faced with the choice which confronted all 'Anglo-Indian' families: should they send the children to England for the sake of their health and education, at the price of long years of separation? Unlike most of their contemporaries, the Hicksons decided that the family must not be broken up; after 16 years in India Frederick gave up his secure position in his firm, and they went back to England to start afresh. During the next five years Frederick built up a small business of his own at Bollington in Cheshire, where he found scope for his interest in teaching as chairman of the local education**

committee. There three more children were born. Then when the Boer War was over Frederick who was a great peace-maker, felt impelled to visit South Africa. During his absence Lizzie rented a house at Swanage on the south coast, and settled down to teach her own children and any others who cared to come. When Frederick returned in 1905 they bought a house, and began together on a life-long teaching career.

Lizzie had all the Beck liveliness and breadth of outlook. When in 1878 a Girls High School opened at Highbury not far from Stoke Newington she was already 16, but she had at once enrolled, and her younger sisters had followed her. Then there were University Extension Lectures. For a time she had longed to go to Cambridge, to Newnham College, to escape from the 'over-seriousness' of life at home. But by the time Frederick met her she was devoting herself to a club for working girls in the slums of Islington, and raising the money for it from her fellow 'Old Girls' of Highbury School. She now gave her energy, experience and insight to the new 'Oldfeld School'. By that time F. D. Maurice's concern for training governesses had grown into the Parents' National Education Union, and its principles were followed in the school. One of the first recruits to the staff was Thomas W. Arnold's sister, and in the lists of pupils were many well-known Quaker names (in addition to Allens, Becks and Hicksons), and other names honoured in India, including a sprinkling of Indians.<sup>13</sup> Visits are recorded from 'Mrs Theodore Beck' and from other lively-minded ex-India Friends such as the Maynards. The Hicksons were open to new ideas, judging them on their merits, by standards of complete moral integrity, while they held on to whatever in the past was intrinsically good, however 'old-fashioned'.

Oldfeld School, which came to an end when it was commandeered by the Army in 1939, was one of the links between older and younger generations of friends of India, many of them Quakers. The Hicksons believed that 'education should be based on religion, not on materialist patriotism'. Oldfeld's religion was not formally Quaker; the school attended Swanage Parish Church – until one day the preacher declared that there was no salvation outside the Church of England! After that Oldfeld remained 'outside', and held its own services.

**The school magazine shows how far Oldfeld was a seed-bed of ideas which were to have their impact on Friends in India as the 20th century wore on. There was a hotly-contested debate on 'Is machinery beneficial?', won by the Noes with a margin of three. There was a comment on the destruction of carnivorous birds: 'We would far rather leave [pest control] to nature than to guns, traps, and poison.'**

The Hicksons' own children were part of their achievement: Eric, the much-loved doctor, a peace-maker like his father, a believer in the cottage

hospital and the general practitioner; Philippa (Pip) who preserved her uncle Theodore's letters from India;<sup>14</sup> Arthur the youngest, who cheerfully gave up his own dreams of a medical career to help his mother in the school when his father's health failed. Friends in India owe something to them all.

The Becks were not the only Friend family to play a part in the life of India over the generations. In 1892 Arthur Lidbetter Wood came home to the Bombay he had left, as a boy of 10 in 1881. He held a Cambridge degree in classics, and had passed the examination for the Indian Civil Service with distinction in Marathi. Martin Wood was at first not altogether pleased that his son should choose to work *within* the government machinery; it was the same issue that had divided him from Beck, the choice between attack from without and reform from within. Arthur himself felt that while he did not 'follow the same path' as his father, he was 'guided by the same lights' of inward, Quaker conviction.

Arthur was soon involved in the Government's projects for relief during the famines at the end of the century. He was put in charge of a large camp of labourers who were excavating a new water reservoir in the Nasik District. Day after day he worked alongside his famine-weakened workforce; during the midday rest he would sit on a boulder among them to eat his own snack. His cheery, genial commonsense – a trait which he shared with his father – made a great contribution to the general morale.<sup>15</sup>

Next he was sent as 'forest demarcation officer' to the wild and hilly Thane District. The work was most congenial; it meant finding ways of protecting the traditional livelihood of the tribal peoples while at the same time ensuring the conservation of the forests. He spent long days among the simple people, and then when darkness fell settled down with his dogs beside his tent. He would take out some favourite volume of the Greek classics and become a student again. It was a strenuous happy life, and it helped to reconcile him to his father, who 20 years earlier had issued his own prophetic warnings against the dangers of forest destruction.

Then came the day when Arthur travelled to Allahabad to be married to Agnes Chichely Plowden (always known as 'Pip') whom he had met on board ship as he returned from leave in England. Her family had for generations given the Government and people of India much able, honest and compassionate service. Pip's own father had been civil magistrate for nearly 20 years in Meerut (where the insurrection of 1857 had started) and had won the respect and affection of Indian and British alike. An older cousin, Sir William Plowden, had had a most distinguished Indian career. He had gone back to Britain soon after Martin Wood, and had entered Parliament, where in 1890 he had introduced a Bill to provide for local government in India based on the traditional *panchayat* system. The Bill had impressed Martin Wood very favourably, but it had not become law.

After his marriage Arthur Wood was offered a transfer to the more highly-paid judicial service, but refused it; he would not, as a Friend, accept a position which might involve imposing a death sentence. He continued as before; wherever he was posted, it was the needs and interests of the *people* which had his first attention. Files came a long way second, and often had to be dealt with by midnight oil. He was not pleased, in 1910, when he was sent to take charge of the salt revenue, for he was openly critical of the Government's salt monopoly. However he obeyed orders, and Pip sometimes accompanied him on his tours of inspection around the coastal creeks. In her company there was fun to be had, even in this distasteful work; they mischievously named the official yacht *Lot's Wife!*<sup>16</sup>

Then came a Government circular, proposing that salt excise officers, should take precedence of the *mamlatdars* (offices of the local administration) according to the salaries they received. Arthur's reaction was blunt and outspoken.

There is no reason [he wrote], why we should treat the excise as if its success were more important than the general good government of the country. To treat the *mamlatdar* as inferior is false policy, particularly so when the other officer represents an *unessential* and *unpopular* branch of the administration, whose very claim to exist is vehemently questioned. The wrong is accentuated when the distinction is made on the soul-less and irrelevant criterion of salary.

So Arthur Wood, 'guided by the same lights' as his father, struggled to reform government practice from within. He saw much to be reformed. Years of varied administration experience had led him to conclude that British institutions were *not* always best suited to India, and he hoped to be 'one of the leaders of change'. The hope was not to be realised. In February 1911, leaving Pip in Bombay with their baby daughter, he went out on tour alone. A chill developed into pneumonia; he was brought back to Bombay, but too late to save his life. Like Theodore Beck, he died in his 40th year; in him, as in Beck, India prematurely lost a friend. The letters which reached Pip from many Indians in humble walks of life, as well as from personal friends of both races, bear witness to the affection he had inspired.<sup>17</sup>

The surviving records of Arthur Wood's life are too scanty for anything more to be said with certainty. But it seems possible that his intimate knowledge of Marathi and his experience among the villagers of Nasik and the tribal communities of Thane were leading him towards an understanding of Indian society akin to that which Beck set out in his *Essays on Indian Topics* published in India in 1888. Beck described the interlocking circles of Indian society, the natural ties of village

origin and occupational tradition which could and did bind people of different religions in 'a common loyalty to a personal ruler and a common reverence for the saints'. Then he went on:

The East has yet, I believe, something to teach the West in this age of violent industrial competition – the gentle influence of ideals of life that belong to a simpler, fresher world. England need fear no impoverishment of her intellectual life by closer union with India.<sup>18</sup>

The East has *something to teach*: ideals of life. That was something which no Friend before Beck had seen so clearly, or set in such significant contrast to the 'violent' structures of western society.

### *Notes to Chapter XI*

1 Sir Walter Raleigh, *Letters*, ed. Lady Raleigh, 1928, vol.1 p.39. 9th November 1885.

2 Oscar Browning, *Memories of Sixty Years*, 1910, pp.307-8.

3 The Apostles Society was founded in the 1820s by F.D.Maurice and others. There were originally twelve members: hence the name.

4 G.Lowes Dickinson, elected an Apostle in 1884. See his *Autobiography*, 1973, pp.68-69.

5 Quoted in the introduction to Syed Ahmed Khan's *Speeches and Writings*, ed. S. Mahomed; and see *Sir Syed Ahmed on the Present State of Indian Politics*, Allahabad 1888, p.25.

6 Quotations from Ahmed Khan's speeches in the Viceroy's Council, 1883. Beck has been blamed for 'turning the Syed against the Congress'. These speeches were made before Beck reached India.

7 The original is written in traditional Persian couplets.

8 Toynbee Hall was a centre for service to the London poor founded by Barnett in 1884, and named for his friend the economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883).

9 An account of the wedding is in the minutes of Devonshire House Monthly Meeting (of which Stoke Newington was a member), 15th January 1891.

10 Speech at the foundation-stone ceremony for the College building, 1877.

11 One of the little boys became Dr H.Amir Ali, a personal friend of the author, who was also able to meet some of Sturge's former students in Hyderabad in the 1980's.

12 *The Nizam's College Magazine*, 1922-23.

13 The account of the Hicksons' Oldfield School is derived from copies of the school magazine in the possession of their granddaughter Mrs Rachel Helfer of Knitson Farm near Swanage, along with personal recollections of a pupil, Hannah (Cadbury) Taylor.

14 Philippa preserved Theodore Beck's letters to his mother from India. They are now on permanent loan to the India Office Library, London.

15 Account in the obituary article in *The Pauliner*, 1911. See also L.S.S.O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930*, 1931, p.164.

16 For the story of Lot's wife see Genesis, chapter 19.

17 These letters, with other papers quoted earlier, were preserved by Arthur Wood's daughter the late Mrs Imogen Wilcox.

18 *Essays on Indian Topics*, Allahabad 1888.



## CHAPTER XII

## The 'Defeated Causes'

*Victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni*

*(With the gods the winning cause finds favour but with Cato the defeated)*

THE LATIN VERSE quoted above, the Roman poet Lucan's tribute to the statesman Cato, is carved on the stone which marks Martin Wood's grave. He died in 1907, and the words were chosen by his son Arthur Lidbetter, who knew how faithfully his father had fought in 'the cause of the suffering and the oppressed'.<sup>1</sup> He had carried on the struggle for more than 40 years, in India and then in England; he had cared nothing for 'the gods' of worldly success, and he died almost unknown, even among Friends. After he left India he had continued to work for India alongside Indian fellow-workers; one of the last of the many Indian guests to enjoy the hospitality of his home was the younger statesman Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who visited him in 1906.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale had served his apprenticeship to national service in the Deccan Education Society which M. G. Ranade had inspired, and had taught in its Fergusson College at Pune (*angl.* Poona). There while still a young man he had given outstanding moral leadership. He stood for *truth*, as against all political or religious partisanship. In 1896 he received information on the basis of which he charged the British administration in Pune with serious shortcomings. Later he found that his informants were unable to substantiate their accusations, and he therefore issued a public apology, in which Pandita Ramabai strongly supported him. This earned him the abuse of some Maratha nationalists, who took the line that 'all's fair in love and war' and called him a traitor, but Gokhale stuck to his principles. He had promised the Deccan Education society 20 years of service, and when these were completed in 1905 he launched his own Servants of India Society, which attracted men of the highest intellectual and moral calibre. They contented themselves with the barest maintenance allowance, and undertook many forms of service for the

powerless and the voiceless: outcasts, women, aboriginal tribes. The Society was to live on after Gokhale's death, and to inspire many public-spirited leaders during the following decades.

In 1885, just as Gokhale was starting on his career, three leaders of the newly-formed Indian National Congress visited England. Henry Fawcett was no longer living, but the ageing John Bright warmly welcomed them, and they set up a committee in London to keep Indian interests before the eyes of the British public. Martin Wood was a member of this Committee; political economist as he was, he concentrated on the financial aspects of Indo-British relationships, both in relation to famines and the military policies of the jingoistic 1890's. Lord Eustace Cecil in Parliament had strongly condemned 'the iniquity of treating India as the barracks of the British Army in the eastern seas', and Martin Wood's language was even more forthright:

The War Office and the Treasury are determined that India must and shall pay for . . . our defiant and aggressive militarism, for a force for South Africa and a sham scare about Russia.

Gokhale also scrupulously fair-minded as he was, concluded (as he told the Indian National Congress in 1905) that the Army and the so-called 'Home Charges' together swallowed up so much of India's total revenue that barely 20% was available for India's own needs.<sup>2</sup>

What could be done? No matter what statesmen like Lord Cecil might say, thought Martin Wood, the War Office and the India Office were in practice 'always in power', and it was they who determined the issue. In 1904 he put this point in a letter to Gokhale, and proposed a line of action.

The one thing which would bring the inner circle of your despots to book [he wrote], would be *systematic passive resistance* – namely for two or three prominent men from each Province to refuse to pay income tax unless the Home Charges are substantially shared by the British Treasury. Such men should be prepared to go to prison rather than pay.

In 1905, when Gokhale had been chosen President of the Congress, Wood repeated his proposal, urging that such action was the only way 'to make Congress resolutions effective'.<sup>3</sup>

One wonders where this proposal originated. Was Martin Wood thinking of those old Quakers who had gone to prison rather than pay the tithes they considered unjust, or was he influenced by some more modern writer such as Thoreau? The fact remains that the proposal was not taken up; there is no hint in the Congress records that it was even considered. But during the following year, 1906, an Indian whom Gokhale had met and greatly respected, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *did* lead 'passive

resistance' against injustices suffered by Indians in the Transvaal, and (rightly disliking to apply the term 'passive' to such an active protest) renamed it *satyagraha*, a firmness for truth. Perhaps in the last months of his life Wood heard of this, and recognised a kindred spirit; his cause, defeated for the time being in India, was not entirely lost.

Meanwhile another cause was being fought for by some of Wood's younger contemporaries in western India. One of them, N. G. Chandavarkar, had been one of the three Congress leaders to visit Britain in 1885. One day in 1895 he came upon two humble railway linesmen relaxing together under a tree while off duty. One was a Muslim, the other a Maratha, and they were singing together the hymns of Kabir and of Tukaram. 'Nowadays,' they said to him, 'we see much of the quarrels of the sects, but *we* are *bhaktas* (devotees) and brothers.'<sup>4</sup> The 'common reverence for the saints' of which Beck had spoken was exercising its reconciling power, and Chandavarkar and his fellow-workers recognised its value.

As the Servants of India Society was to live on after Gokhale's death, so in eastern India a much older Society lived on, Rammohun Roy's Brahmo Samaj. Dwarkanath Tagore's grandson Rabindranath, nurtured in its traditions, was a young man of 24 when the Indian National Congress was founded, already becoming known as a poet. Growing to manhood during the 1870's he had been deeply moved by 'the large-hearted radical liberalism' of John Bright,<sup>4a</sup> and during the following years he played a great part in the national awakening. He worked in Bengali villages to promote self-reliance and unity, and his penetrating and challenging essays were widely read. He launched his ashram-school at Santiniketan, and welcomed helpers of all religious traditions to make it a centre of humane and creative Indian education.

In 1904 an event took place which stirred national feeling throughout India: an eastern nation, Japan, inflicted a military defeat on a western nation, Russia. Marathas, remembering their own hero-king Shivaji, dreamed of winning Indian freedom in the same way, by force. At the same time Bengali feeling was deeply hurt by the British administrative decision to partition their native land.<sup>5</sup> Rabindranath plunged into the political arena, and led great public protests through the streets of Calcutta, singing his own magnificent national songs.

The public excitement made British officials very uneasy; the 50th anniversary of the insurrection of 1857 was approaching, and they feared a possible repetition. Some of them panicked, and a much-respected Punjabi national leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, was summarily deported to the Andamans.

Gokhale intervened. He led a determined and successful all-India campaign for Lajpat Rai's release. That done, he turned his attention to the turmoil in Bengal. Bengali anger at the partition of Bengal had been

expressed in a wide-spread boycott of foreign goods, and this had been followed by serious rioting in which Muslims attacked Hindus, and for which officials blamed the boycott. Gokhale went to Bengal and studied the situation for himself. The rioting had nothing to do with the boycott, he found; Muslims benefited by the boycott. The violence had been provoked by a broadsheet calling Muslims to a *jehad* (holy war) and the officials had done much harm by winking at the violence and failing to suppress it when it first began. Gokhale offered to establish these facts before a Commission of Inquiry. None was ever appointed, and he was much distressed. 'I do not blame the men themselves,' he wrote. 'They were ignorant and misled. But for those whose best hope for the future lies in the two communities working together, the quarrel is deeply painful.'<sup>6</sup> Another great cause had been defeated.

Gokhale also interested himself in one matter which was of direct concern to Friends. In 1899 he joined with Pandita Ramabai to plead that *The Guardian* should not cease publication when Alfred and Helen Dyer left India, in spite of the difficulties which had resulted from his editorship. Their protests were heeded, and a young Quaker couple, Percy and Alice Horne, were appointed joint editors. Under their leadership, and that of their helper and successor Arthur J. Sharpe, *The Guardian* recovered its original breadth of outlook, and began 'to deal with all current topics from the standpoint of spiritual views of Christian truth and its testimony for peace and national righteousness.' It soon earned wide recognition for its sanity of outlook and its 'undeviating standard of right and wrong.'<sup>7</sup> But during the exigencies of the First World War Friends could not continue to provide personnel and the editorship was taken over by Christians who held the view that 'national righteousness' was 'quite different from the Gospel' and therefore was not their concern. Once more *The Guardian* lost subscribers, and in 1918 Friends closed it down.

In 1893 the opium trade – that 'national sin of the greatest possible magnitude'<sup>8</sup> which Joseph Pease had struggled against 50 years earlier – was challenged in the House of Commons. A Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed, but the 'opium lobby' succeeded in getting the China traffic excluded from its terms of reference, which covered only 'the production and consumption of opium in India'. The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade had a Quaker secretary, Joseph Gundry Alexander, who spent several months in India in the winter of 1893-94 in order to monitor the Commission's proceedings. His work recalls that of Joseph Pease before him; he showed the same compassion, the same openness, the same determination in face of difficulties, the same practical commonsense. Visiting Bombay first, he concluded that Dyer's unproven charges against local officials were not wholly unfounded. He quickly realised that those who 'took their cue from officials' in order to

serve their own interests were unreliable witnesses, as were the big landlords who found poppy-cultivation profitable. As for the missionaries, 'those missionaries who live altogether above the natives' were too remote from the latter's daily lives to have any real knowledge of the matter.

In Bihar Joseph Alexander met an Indian Christian pastor named Premchand, who lived among the peasants and knew what poppy-growing meant to them. Like indigo, it meant oppression. With Premchand's help Alexander learned of the brutal methods by which peasants were 'persuaded', against their will, to cultivate the opium poppy. He also learned of the mean, dishonest subterfuges by which people like Premchand were prevented from giving evidence before the Commission and so bringing the facts to light. When he reached Calcutta he therefore did all in his power to ensure that such witnesses *were* heard. He was bitterly attacked by a section of the 'Anglo-Indian' press, but editors of Indian newspapers sought him out to thank him, and members of the Brahmo Samaj gave him friendly support.

When the findings of the Royal Commission were debated in Parliament a Quaker MP, John Edward Ellis, laid Joseph Alexander's independent report before the House, and pointed out that the Commission's conclusions could be invalidated by the unscrupulous tinkering with evidence which Alexander had exposed. Ellis made an outstanding speech, but the House was unwilling to listen. Another good cause suffered defeat, as William Plowden's Local Councils Bill had suffered defeat a few years earlier.

In the south of India, during the same period, missionary and Indian leaders united to press upon the Government the importance of the local cooperation and self-reliance which Plowden's Bill had been designed to encourage. They were especially concerned for education. The system of grants-in-aid to independent educational bodies (which William Delafield Arnold had helped to establish during the last years of East India Company rule) 'fostered a spirit of reliance upon local exertions, and combination for local purposes which,' they wrote, 'is itself of no mean importance to the well-being of a nation.' But the tendency, in education as elsewhere, was to centralisation, to a pattern of Government institutions which in the words of Syed Ahmed Khan, 'left the inner spirit dead,' and which provoked an Indian Christian leader to declare that 'the spirit of selfishness has Indian education in its grip'.

A disappointment of another kind was the response – or the lack of response – to what could have been an important contribution to Indian Quakerism. Poornachandra Sarkar, whose 'experience of grace' has been mentioned in Chapter IX, set to work in 1892 on a full exposition of what Quakerism meant to the local, independent group in Calcutta. He begins

by describing himself as 'a Hindu Quaker, by race a Hindu and by grace a Quaker', who desired to be 'a humble follower of Jesus Christ in deed and truth.' He goes on to say that he would try to write from his own inward knowledge, so that the book might be 'the outcome of my actual experience, and not of mere notion'. He speaks gratefully of those writings of early Friends which the group had received as a gift from London in 1861, and especially of the words of Isaac Penington: 'All truth is a shadow except the last – except the utmost, yet every truth is true in its kind . . . and the shadow is a true shadow, as the substance is a true substance.' The words for him, echoed those of his own teacher Keshab Chandra Sen: 'We do not come to a determination when we have found out one truth. We find there is yet a deeper truth beyond it.'<sup>9</sup>

Poornachandra made the image of the shadow and the substance his own. Those who know 'the new birth, and the substance and spirituality of the religion of Jesus Christ,' he says, 'have no need to abandon their nationality and their society.' He spoke of Jesus in Indian terms as the *Kalki Avatara*, the Incarnate One of our age of darkness. But his knowledge of the treasures of Indian thought was limited, they had formed no part of his western-oriented education. One day however while he was writing his book his Quaker son brought home a Bengali translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.<sup>10</sup> Reading it for the first time in the maturity of his own experience Poornachandra was deeply impressed, and began to plan a second volume in which the insights of the *Gita* might be related to the Quaker principles of 'peace and public righteousness' which meant so much to Calcutta Friends. It is not clear that this second volume was ever written, although a note of its proposed contents has survived.

The first volume, *The Universal Spiritual Religion of God on Earth*, never found a publisher, and Poornachandra's hope of being able to commend his Quaker faith to his countrymen in its Indian setting was defeated. In 1896 when the book was completed Joseph Taylor, who alone might have advised him, was more than fully occupied with the onset of the famine years. It was more than 20 years before Joseph himself settled in Calcutta, and by that time Poornachandra and other senior Friends had died. Those who remained brought the manuscript to Joseph, but many years passed before its contents were studied.

In 1908-09, after the years of struggle with post-famine difficulties, morale among the Friends in Hoşangabad District was low. Some seniors, tired and set in their ways, tended to work as they individually pleased, with little regard for other interests, little sense of common purpose. Among the new recruits from Britain were fine young people, but also some serious misfits who had to be withdrawn. The mission, wrote Joseph Taylor 'is middle-aged, and there are weeds in the heart'.

The FFMA sent a delegation of three men to study the problems; one of them was A. J. Crosfield, who prayed so earnestly and often for a renewal of 'the Holy Spirit' that Indian Friends called him 'the Holy Spirit man'.

An able and enthusiastic youngster, Roland Priestman, who had arrived in 1903, saw clearly the need for unity and cooperation. He believed however that this could be achieved by drawing up a set of rules to which everyone should conform. He got the support of the young doctor Joseph Robinson, and also of Crosfield's fellow-delegate W. E. Wilson. A code of rules was drafted, pushed through and brought into operation, with no previous consultation either with experienced Indian workers or with senior women like Anna Evens or Alice Swan. The consequences were sometimes ludicrous, but in general they were disastrous. Men like Nathulal and Ibrahim were deeply hurt; they felt degraded to the level of Government clerks by rules about 'working hours' and 'leave'. The Lord had called them to serve Him at all times, they said, not with one eye on the clock! They knew well that some of the foreign missionaries were not even on speaking terms with one another; rules would not help, only a renewal of love and trust.

This was the situation when towards the end of 1910 Rasulia got an unexpected recruit from an unexpected quarter: Frank Berry Farrington joined the staff from South Africa. Like Alfred Smith he was a man of about 50 when he reached Hoshangabad.

Farrington was a London Friend, educated at the Croydon Friends School and trained in banking, who had joined the Standard Bank of South Africa in 1889. There, along with his Croydon schoolmate James Butler, and another steadfast Friend Howard Pim, he had struggled in vain to bring Boer and British together and to oppose the policies which led to the Boer War. During that war he had held a responsible position at De Aar, the great railway junction equidistant from Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. There he witnessed the plight of the Boer civilians who were driven from their homes by the fighting. Many of them were aged and infirm, and he wrote forcefully to London about their needs.<sup>12</sup>

These were years of heavy strain and in the end caused a nervous breakdown. Farrington resigned from the bank and settled in the quiet town of Worcester in Cape Colony where he earned an independent livelihood. In 1905 a younger Friend arrived in the Colony with whom he found a personal link; the newcomer was a member of the same Hull Meeting in England as Farrington's own younger brother. His name was Leonard Priestman, and he was a cousin and close friend of Roland Priestman in Hoshangabad. Through him Farrington heard of the need in Rasulia, offered to help, and was appointed on a three-year contract.

'What a boon to have a yoke-fellow!' wrote George Clark, who was heavily burdened with the 'outside work' demanded by the mission. Farrington at once took charge of the Works, and soon picked up enough Hindi to make friends with the workmen and the young apprentices. The following year Henry Hodgkin, the newly-appointed secretary of the FFMA, visited India and met him for the first time. 'A great good warm-hearted man,' he wrote, 'a simple-minded, genuine Christian, a doer not a talker, zealous in his business affairs, with a sense of humour that is much needed. He speaks his mind, sometimes bluntly, but a joke always follows, and he is not a man to bear a grudge.' It is a pleasant picture.

Before Farrington's coming there had been a good deal of discontent among the workmen, for George Clark, with all his great gifts, was not skilled in personal relationships. Farrington's friendly interest changed things; by common consent arbitration machinery was set up to deal with future disputes, and it was arranged that a Hoshangabad Friend should occasionally lead the midday Bible study, in order to provide variety and interest. Difficulties arising from the general situation in the mission, however, were not so easily overcome. George Clark was not on speaking terms with the secretary of the local Works Committee. Farrington himself, who was one of the most senior and experienced men in the mission, was informed that 'under the rules' he was not 'fully accredited', and that he therefore had no right to participate in decision-making or even to put his own practical and sometimes urgent needs before the committee. It could be a frustrating experience.

Nevertheless Farrington persevered. As his own detailed knowledge of the business increased he came to the conclusion that the policy of subordinating 'profits' to 'the service of the mission' was unsound. If the Works were to produce self-reliant workmen and so strengthen the Quaker church, he argued, there must be a thoroughly business-like approach. He proposed that the Works should be organised as a private company and made into a useful, profitable enterprise. One might then look forward to its development as a Christian cooperative. It was an imaginative proposal, but his fellow-workers had neither the vision nor the courage to adopt it, and Farrington was not prepared to consider any extension of his three-year contract on any other terms.

Farrington therefore left Rasulia towards the end of 1913, and the final weeks before his departure were tragically unhappy. On Farrington's invitation Nathulal had given a talk at the midday Bible study which George Clark chose to interpret as a personal criticism of himself. Hot letters followed, to Joseph Taylor and to Henry Robson, and Farrington finally left 'without taking stock or handing over charge'. That is so inconsistent with all that is known of him otherwise that one can only surmise that constant

mental strain had resulted in a temporary loss of control, such as he had suffered earlier at De Aar. Henry Hodgkin, Henry Robson and Joseph Taylor, all generous fair-minded men, were much distressed.<sup>13</sup>

Farrington went back to Worcester, and there in 1914 he married a Friend who came from his own part of north London. Eight years later he died, 'after much suffering patiently borne'. The Industrial Works did not long survive his departure. In 1918 Roland Priestman closed down the whole enterprise, with what seemed to many undue haste and a reckless disregard of the loss sustained.

Even the Bundelkhand Friends, whose situation during these years was happier and more hopeful, suffered one sad defeat. Only about half a mile from their Nowgong compound was a village called Kanjarpur. The Kanjars were one of the so-called 'criminal tribes' who traditionally had lived by thieving. The Government, in an attempt to reclaim them, had organised 'settlements' for such tribes throughout India, of which Kanjarpur was one. There as elsewhere there was police control and a daily roll-call.

Duojobai's son Prem Das, who by 1912 had become a teacher in the orphanage, became interested in the Kanjars. So did another able young man named Pancham Singh, also an ex-orphan. The two of them got permission to talk to the Kanjars after roll-call one day, and they had such a friendly welcome that they persuaded the church to include Kanjarpur among its centres of voluntary service. Pancham Singh could not long continue: he was transferred to Harpalpur, but Prem Das gave two hours a day, after his regular teaching hours, to a score of Kanjar boys, all eager pupils. The Political Agent took a friendly interest in these developments, and suggested that some of the girls might learn too. The mission had a new woman helper, Margaret Smith, who like Eliza Frankland had been recruited in India. She took up the idea with enthusiasm and soon had a class of 18 young women learning needlework and other things.

Margaret soon began to urge that someone, or better a married couple, should go and *live* in Kanjarpur, right among the people. The Political Agent took a further step; in 1914 he invited Friends to take over the whole settlement and start agricultural and industrial projects there with the Government's financial support. It was a great opportunity for service. But in 1914 Delia Fistler had left India gravely ill, never to return, while at the same time the American Board was faced with a financial crisis so serious that it was only the faith and persistence of Esther Baird, Superintendent in Delia's place, that prevented them from giving up the Bundelkhand work altogether. The mission was told that it *must* retrench, and as any other retrenchment seemed unthinkable Clinton Morris, the first male missionary, decided to retrench himself and return home. So

that when the Agent's invitation came the missionary staff was seriously depleted, and Prem Das, who with his dedicated young wife might have made the ideal leader for the project, was dying of tuberculosis. In any case, the missionaries were not yet ready to give such responsibility to Indians without supervision – and that they were too few to provide. So nothing was done, except that Mangalwadi, Prem Das' younger brother, continued his faithful small-scale work.

A few years later came the final blow: the Government decided that the settlement should be closed. The Kanjars came and begged the Friends for help, and the Friends had no help to give. With tears in their eyes they watched the homeless people pick up their bundles and walk away, back to the old life of petty theft. It is an even more tragic picture than that of the mounds of earth in the Satpura jungles which marked the end of George Swan's tribal settlements of the 1890's.

The record of defeat is dark indeed. But a new dawn had already begun.

## Notes to Chapter XII

- 1 Tribute published in *The Times of India*, 1907.
- 2 Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, 1905.
- 3 Letters to Gokhale preserved in the National Archives, New Delhi.
- 4 See *A Wrestling Soul*, centenary memorial biography of Chandavarkar by G.L.Chandavarkar, Bombay 1955, pp.186-7. [Marjorie's quotation is not exact, but conveys the sense of the original faithfully enough.] For Kabir and Tukaram see Chapter 1.
- 4a Tagore heard Bright speak in Parliament in 1879, and recalled this 62 years later, shortly before his death. See Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: a Biography*, 1962, p.394.
- 5 The previously unwieldy province included along with Bengal the present States of Assam, Bihar and Orissa. *Some* division was necessary, but a division which partitioned Bengal itself was unacceptable.
- 6 Report in the National Archives, New Delhi.
- 7 J.Sinclair Stevenson, Ahmedabad, letter to Joseph Taylor.
- 8 So characterised by Dr Thomas Arnold of Rugby: see A.P.Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, 1844, vol.2 p.198.
- 9 The words quoted are as recorded by Henry Stanley Newman, who met Keshab during his visit to India in 1881: *Days of Grace in India*, 1882, p.251.

10 One of the most revered of India's sacred books. See Chapter 1.

11 When the Taylors left Calcutta in 1924 the manuscript was left with the remaining Bengali Friend, Nalin Ganguly, who died in 1940. In 1943 Nalin's brother Alin brought it to Horace Alexander, who took it to England. There it spent the war years in the keeping of some Friend at a distance from the risks of central London. When the war was over it was sent to Friends House; when the present writer first saw it over thirty years later it was still in the brown paper wrappings in which it had arrived. It bore the postmark of the little country town Berkhamstead, the home of a Friend who had previously been in Madras.

12 See Hope Hewison, *A Hedge of Wild Almonds*, 1989, p.146.

13 First-hand evidence for these events is not available. In 1925 when London Yearly Meeting moved to its new offices in Friends House, difficult decisions had to be made about which of the accumulated mass of records should be kept, and which discarded. All that remains is comment.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Vision Renewed

*Every new generation needs a free and fearless education  
and the opportunity for service.*

W. C. BRAITHWAITE, *THE SECOND PERIOD OF QUAKERISM*

ONE OF THE HERALDS of the new dawn, in Britain and in India, was Bishop Brooke Foss Westcott of Durham. He was one of the 'right reverend scholars' the historical realism of whose biblical commentaries had appealed to Samuel Baker, and he combined his Greek scholarship both with a deep interest in Indian thought, and with a sensitive awareness of the social dimensions of the Gospel. This led him to work for fair wages and better conditions for the coalmines of his diocese, and to support Martin Wood in the cause of peace among the nations. His book *Social Aspects of Christianity* was much quoted at two important gatherings of British Friends which took place at Manchester in 1895 and at Darlington in 1896.

The Manchester conference was concerned with the intellectual and spiritual nurture of Friends in Britain. A young thinker, John Wilhelm Rowntree, took a leading part. 'The true Gospel of Jesus Christ,' he said, 'is not written in books, but in the collective illuminated conscience of his followers.' He challenged many widely held ideas, and the conference reached no unity of opinion, but it was roused to the need for study. It took steps which led in 1903 to the opening of the Woodbrooke College in Birmingham, which aimed both 'to inform and to enflame' the Society, so that 'love and truth' might advance together.

The Friends who met at Darlington the following year, like those who had met in Bedfordshire in 1657, were concerned with the call to 'publish Truth among all nations'. As at Manchester the generations met, and fresh insights were expressed. Charles Terrell, back from his six years in Sehore, told his hearers of the 'dense spiritual darkness' which existed in India. His chairman, the historian Thomas B. Hodgkin,<sup>2</sup> raised courteous questions: Was not a Friend's distinctive calling to seek and 'answer' the natural goodness in others? When faced with evil, should not one endeavour 'to



read the palimpsest of the human heart'? A palimpsest is a parchment whose original words have been over-written and obscured; with care they may be uncovered and read. So, said Hodgkin, should a Quaker look beneath the defaced surface of humanity for the original divine inscription.

'The Society of Friends,' said another speaker, 'need not fear a reverent, sympathetic and honest study of other faiths. Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil.' Tregelles Fox the doctor<sup>3</sup> argued that Truth might be published as well by medical, educational and industrial workers as by preachers. Antonius Manasseh, a medical student from Syria, suggested that Friends called to foreign lands should seek guidance from the people of the country to which they went, rather than take the lead themselves.

Each of these speakers was questioning practices followed by most FFMA leaders and missionaries during the previous 20 years. They had undoubtedly taken the lead; they had seen little but unrelieved 'darkness' around them and had regarded India's religions with hostility; they had valued clinics and schools mainly as giving them a 'captive audience' for their preaching. On the other hand these new voices at Darlington had much in common with the pioneers of the 1860's, Rachel Metcalfe, Elkanah B  ard, Charles Gayford, and with other Friends who had worked in India outside the mission. In that very year 1896 T. W. Arnold of Aligarh published his 'sympathetic and honest study' of some aspects of Islam,<sup>4</sup> and Poornachandra Sarkar completed his *Universal Spiritual Religion*, expressing the point of view of 'the people of the country'. But Aligarh and Calcutta were then unknown in FFMA circles.

The FFMA was preparing its new missionaries at Chester House in London, where they received basic language and medical training as Gayford and Baker had done earlier. In 1901 when Joseph Taylor needed prolonged recuperation after his famine service he had taken charge of Chester House. As soon as Woodbrooke was opened in 1903 however he urged that Chester House should be closed, and that the missionary training should be carried out somewhere near Woodbrooke and benefit from what Woodbrooke had to give. This was agreed. Kingsmead College took the place of Chester House, John William Hoyland was appointed Principal, and Joseph Taylor, his health restored, returned to India.

Meanwhile Bishop Westcott had shared his thoughts on India with others in the University of Cambridge. India and Greece, he said, were the two 'great thinking nations'; in India as in Greece, there had been a never-failing response to love and truth. Would not India respond to the love and truth of the Gospel, if it were offered in humility and reverence? So the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, a new kind of mission, was founded in the closing decades of the 19th century. It chose *Delhi*, the ancient capital, and built St Stephen's College in a style inspired by Delhi's great Mogul architecture. S. S. Allnutt,

the Principal, incurred much disapproval for this in missionary circles, but won the approval and support of T. W. Arnold of Aligarh. The support was mutual; each man valued the other's understanding and friendship.

In 1890 a Birmingham lad of 19, Charles Freer Andrews, entered Pembroke College Cambridge. Born in 1871 he was an exact contemporary of Arthur Lidbetter Wood. Both read classics, both were rowing men, so that although they were members of different colleges it is possible that they met in lecture rooms and on the river and that Andrews knew of Wood's enthusiasm for India, his native land. That however is speculation. What is certain is that Andrews was quickly drawn into Westcott's circle and into support for the Cambridge Mission to Delhi. He did not himself join the staff of St Stephen's till early in 1904; he spent much of the intervening years in service to the poor in England which was also inspired by Westcott.

During Andrews' first year in India he encountered that 'Pride of race' among Englishmen, and 'Pride of caste' among Indians, which were in his eyes both equally wrong. His own friends were Indian. In St Stephen's College there was the Vice-Principal, Sushil Kumar Rudra, a staunch lover of his country. Outside the College there was an informal club of cultured Delhi Muslims, supporters of the Aligarh College, who made him welcome and introduced him to the treasures of Islamic devotion.

In the summer of 1905, needing some medical treatment, Andrews paid a short visit to England and his Birmingham home. In Birmingham he met John William Hoyland and his schoolboy son John Somervell (Jack) who was himself working for entrance to a Cambridge college. During the next few years, while Andrews was back in India, Jack Hoyland entered Christ's College for the three-year course for an honours degree in history. During his time at the University the links with Andrews were maintained and strengthened.

In 1907 the English Principal of St Stephen's retired, and Sushil Kumar Rudra succeeded him. An *Indian* Principal for a Christian college was something unheard of; it would not have happened even then if Andrews and other young foreigners had not insisted that they must work under Indian leadership. During the years that followed, Andrews, Rudra and other Indian Christian thinkers were frequent contributors to the British university magazine *The Student Movement* and the church magazine *The East and the West*. They introduced English readers to the insights and achievements of the great Indian saints of the past. 'That God hid himself from men like these, who sought Him with such consuming passion,' wrote G. C. Chatterji, 'is a thought that India can never accept.' These writers invited young British Christians to come to India as friends and equals (as Beck and Sturge and Arnold had done). Many responded. Christians they were, but they did not assume that *they* therefore had the whole truth. They shared Bishop

Westcott's faith in a spiritual illumination, universal as the family of man, which meant having God as their fellow-worker and the secret voice of the soul their witness.<sup>6</sup>

While Jack Hoyland was at Cambridge his father John William Hoyland visited India as a member of the British Quaker delegation of 1908-9. Besides the personal problems of the time with which they had attempted to deal, there were others which were equally serious. The little mission was almost completely isolated both from the creative thinking of some of their fellow-Christians in India, and from the national aspirations voiced by such men as Gokhale and Tagore. On the local level they were equally isolated from their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. The 'ghetto' mentality showed in the anxiety that Christians should live apart from the general population in order to 'avoid contamination'. There were some among the missionaries who deplored this attitude – Joseph Taylor in the older generation, Henry Robson and Basil Backhouse among the young. Their outlook was shared by Francis and Ann Kilbey, 'working-class' missionaries like Munnings and Swan, who had earned their living in the shoe-making trade in London. Francis had attended one of the Friends' Adult Schools, got a good education by his own efforts, become a Friend and been sent to India in 1894. But apart from these the isolation was generally accepted. How could it be overcome?

Back in England in the summer of 1909 Crosfield and Hoyland called a conference of young Friends to consider possible new forms of Quaker religious service in India. The meeting was held at Kingsmead, and Joseph Taylor who was once more on leave was there to help. There was a good response, and among those who attended were three young men each of whom was to make a distinctive contribution: Joseph Alexander's son Horace Gundry Alexander, Hoyland's son Jack, and Geoffrey Waring Maw whose mother (like the mothers of Theodore Beck and Tregelles Fox) was an Allen of Stoke Newington. At the same time Crosfield and Hoyland were pressing the FFMA to reopen the Hoshangabad High School as one way of broadening the intellectual and spiritual outlook of Indian Friends. They found a sympathetic listener in the new secretary, Henry T. Hodgkin, who had himself been engaged previously in higher education in China. In 1910 under his leadership the FFMA approved the reopening of the school, and provisionally accepted Jack Hoyland, who was just completing his studies at Cambridge, as its future Principal. For various reasons however an immediate reopening was not possible.

The first young recruits from the Kingsmead conference to reach India were therefore Geoffrey Maw and his fiancée Mildred Brison. They had spent a year gaining some basic medical knowledge in London hospitals, where Geoffrey showed himself 'a born doctor', and they sailed for India towards the end of 1910. After some hesitation over 'the proprieties' they were allowed to travel by the same ship, but as soon as they reached their



*Jack Hoyland with his two sons John and Denys (the younger one) in 1919, shortly after the deaths of his wife Helen and of their third son Peter.*

destination they were separated as widely as possible and told that they might only think of marriage after they had passed their language examination. It was a powerful incentive, if they had needed one! A year later Geoffrey topped the whole list of candidates, with Mildred not far behind. They married, and settled down to work and to learn.

Fortunately, as they soon found, the difficulties and tragedies of the post-famine years were not the whole picture. There were signs of independent thought and spiritual growth, much of which had its roots in Joseph Taylor's 20 years of witness in Seoni. Prem Masih Datt had become a Christian there, and in 1905 he and

Henry Robson together opened a Bible School, and began to train for religious service a group of young men, some of whom had once been famine orphans. Dr Johory had also joined the Friends in Seoni; he now had a medical practice in the little towns on the borders of Bhopal and Gwalior States. Because of his friendly contacts there one of Prem Masih's students started a little Christian centre at Bhilsa (Vidisha), support for which was raised entirely by local Friends led by Nathulal. In Seoni itself Alice Swan had created a very simple industrial school for village girls, who lived in wholly village ways, and the Friends' Boys' School there had an excellent Headmaster, Kalu Ram, who owed much both to Joseph Taylor and to Douglas Maynard.

There was also one rather tenuous link with the wider Christian community. This was the India Sunday School Union whose headquarters were at Coonoor in the Nilgiri Hills, and in which Philip Thompson's friends the Stanes family took an active interest. Perhaps because of the links which Eliza Frankland had established with the Hoshangabad Friends, Leonard Stanes had visited Hoshangabad for Sunday School work in 1904. By 1909 the Sunday School Union had Quaker secretaries, Edward and Edith

Annett, who had previously worked for Friends in Sri Lanka. They combined devotion to the Gospel with respect for historical and scientific scholarship as Westcott did. But influences of this kind had a very slight impact, and the Hoshangabad Friends still hesitated to send promising students even to a *Christian* college unless they could live in a hostel under the care of 'one of *our own* missionaries'!

Jack Hoyland had a wider vision. As a student in Christ's College he had brought together in one college Christian Fellowship members of student Christian societies which were usually regarded as rivals. Soon after he had taken his degree he and Geoffrey Maw had both joined the young volunteers who helped at the ecumenical Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910.<sup>7</sup> After that he had gone to the United States to study theology, and there along with the American Friend Rufus Jones he quietly began to bring together in personal friendship members of the separated branches of American Quakerism. Months of patient work culminated in July 1912 when young men and women from all the separate groups met face to face and discovered one another's likeable human qualities and genuine religious experience, so that the divisive labels no longer mattered.

In 1912 it was not only the Hoshangabad High School that was making a new start, the agricultural settlement at Lahi was also being re-shaped. When Alfred Smith went on leave in 1911 it was decided to make the village of Makoriya the centre of operations. It was in the plains, on the fringe of the forest, and it was hoped that farming there would be easier and more profitable. A practising Cumbrian farmer, T. Ratcliffe Addison, was appointed to get the new scheme going, and he reached India in October 1913. During the following year, in the missionary language school, he met a young doctor from Iowa who was working for the Disciples of Christ mission. In 1916 they were married, and their home in Makoriya came to have a high place in Jack Hoyland's affections.

The year 1912 had seen a new start for India also. The King-Emperor had paid a State visit to the country and at a ceremonial Durbar had personally announced the reversal of the unpopular partition of Bengal and along with this the transfer of the seat of government to Delhi, the ancient historic capital. Both decisions were welcomed by the Indian people, but many British residents stood aloof, for the fears aroused in 1857 were still playing havoc. G. Lowes Dickinson, a senior Cambridge 'Apostle' who had been elected in 1884, visited India later in 1912 and found the gulf between British and Indian society 'almost absolute'. 'Indians feel degraded and slighted,' he wrote. 'One of them told me that it was like a breath of fresh air to be able to talk to an Englishman as they used to do in England.' Jack had the same kind of experience on board ship, where his British fellow-passengers treated him as 'a rank outsider' because he made friends with Indians on the voyage just as he had done in Cambridge.<sup>8</sup>

Besides Joseph Taylor and the Maws, Jack found another Kingsmead contact in Hoshangabad. Percy B. Herring had been living there in 1909 while he studied at Birmingham University, and had attended the young Friends' conference. He was the son of a Gurkha soldier who had been drawn to Christ by his English colonel and who when baptised had taken the colonel's name. Percy (whose Indian name was Shiv Ram) was attracted to Friends, and on returning to India had settled in Hoshangabad and opened a Commercial School in the Bazaar. As for Joseph Taylor, he was as convinced as ever that Quaker insights should be shared more widely, especially with Bengal. A. J. Crosfield's nephew, William Winstanley Pearson, had joined the staff of Tagore's school in Santiniketan, and by 1911 he too was pleading that Friends should provide a hostel for students in Calcutta. It was something much needed, but Friends had no one to send. Jack Hoyland was committed to Hoshangabad.

The first step was to learn the language, and Andrews had already arranged that Jack should live and study in Sushil Rudra's home in Delhi. There he went, after a few preliminary days in Hoshangabad, and quickly made friends with Sushil's son Sudhir. Andrews himself was there, and on one occasion took Sudhir and Jack with him on a visit to Mahatma Munshi Ram. The Mahatma was one of the leaders of the Arya Samaj, whose aim was to re-invigorate Hinduism by purifying its practice, and whose methods of propaganda were similar to those of Christian missions. Most Christians regarded it with suspicion and hostility. Not so Andrews; he went to listen, understand and make friends. He asked quiet courteous questions, he sought fellowship with the Mahatma in a common search for truth. Jack remembering his own experience of the healing power of personal friendship in America, watched eagerly. Was not the task of Friends, he reflected, simply to *be* friends, to support others as they found their own way to truth? In Simla where he continued his language study during the hot weather of 1913, he watched how other friends of Andrews, the Viceroy and Lady Hardinge, brought the same warm and sympathetic listening into their dealings with Indians.

Before he left England Jack had become engaged to be married, and it was arranged that his fiancée Helen Doncaster should join him in the late autumn of 1913 when he had passed his language examinations. That summer Katharine Dixon had retired, the remaining girl orphans were sent to Sohagpur, and the bungalow and the orphanage buildings became available for the Hoylands and the High School. So when Jack came back to Hoshangabad in August it was no longer to spend a few happy-go-lucky days with Percy Herring in the bazaar, but to live in the bungalow and prepare it for his bride. 'Too many servants,' he grumbled, but it was not possible to run a 'European' bungalow without them. Some of his colleagues were not very congenial; few of them were aware of the noble

national ideals of men like Gokhale, to which Andrews and Rudra had introduced him. All they had met were the recurrent rumours that 'the British' were spreading plague and poisoning wells, and most of them therefore thought it their duty to 'uphold the cause of loyalty'.

October 1913 arrived, and Helen Doncaster. Jack's examinations were successfully over, there was a happy wedding and a honeymoon. They went first to the mountains, to Darjeeling; then turning westward again they came to Benares (Varanasi) with its great Hindu monuments and the Buddhist Sarnath close by. 'It is impossible,' Jack wrote, 'to express in words the meaning of Benares for the work of the Kingdom of God.' Like Elkanah Beard before him he was moved by the devotion of the worshippers on the river *ghats*, and thought how 'easy-going' in contrast much Christian practice seemed.

The Hoylands went on from Benares to meet Jack's friends in Delhi, where there was a different kind of stimulus. G. K. Gokhale had just come back from a visit to South Africa, and was appealing for support for Gandhi's struggle there. It was no cheap appeal. Gokhale faced crowded meetings of excited students and told them that they had no right to condemn 'apartheid' in South Africa so long as they practised it against so-called 'untouchables' at home. Then south to Agra where some of Jack's Cambridge contemporaries were teaching at St John's College. From Agra they went south again to Bhopal. Jack made friends there with Dr Johory, who by then had become the Begum's personal physician. They reached Hoshangabad again just as Lord Hardinge, speaking in Madras, identified himself with India's anger at the treatment of Indian indentured labour in the sugar colonies. Jack set to work to arrange a local public meeting in Hardinge's support, only to find himself followed about by government 'informers'!

From the beginning of 1914 Jack took up his own task, the restarting of the Friends High School. He chose a Headmaster, Nalin Ganguly, a Bengali Brahmin with 10 years of teaching experience. He arranged with Percy Herring to amalgamate his Commercial Institute with the High School classes. The school was formally opened in April, and students were enrolled, but regular work did not begin until July, when the monsoon rains had modified the fierce heat of May and June. The Hoylands spent those two months in Simla where Jack engaged a pandit and studied the *Ramayana*, not in Hindi but in Sanskrit. What made him do that? During his visit to Benares a few months earlier, did he meet his Christ's College contemporary Ralph Lilley Turner? Turner had taken a brilliant degree in classics; then while Jack went to America he had stayed on in Cambridge to study oriental languages and win a prize in Sanskrit, and earlier in 1913 had been appointed to the Government College in Benares. Was it Turner who 'infected' Hoyland with his own enthusiasm for Sanskrit, so that

Hoyland decided to taste it for himself at the first opportunity? There is no evidence of a meeting, but neither is there any other explanation of this interest in Sanskrit, which was not afterwards maintained.

Jack Hoyland envisaged the High School's task as 'to permeate the culture of India with the values and standards of Jesus'. The imagery of permeation, familiar to Beard and Gayford more than 40 years earlier, was no longer unacceptable to the FFMA. Henry Hodgkin had set in the forefront of his first annual report a quotation from N. G. Chandavarkar, who wrote of 'the permeation of Indian thought and life by the ideas which lie at the heart of the Gospel'. Permeation moreover did *not* mean compromise. Jack was committed to a '100%' discipleship of Jesus as fully as were the Maws and their contemporaries in Bundelkhand. He believed that Friends should practise this discipleship in every aspect of life, not only in Bible classes but in all the activities of the school community.

Among these activities he gave a large place to games and sports. With his own magnificent physique he himself joined the boys on the playing fields, and encouraged them to take a pride not only in the mastery of skills but also in unselfish team work and scrupulously honest fair play. The Narmada river was close at hand. Together Jack and the boys built boats, and launched them, and crossed the river to explore the hills and forests beyond. They invited other schools in the region to join them in holiday camps, where sports and excursions went hand in hand with worship and Bible study, and where Dr Johory, at 55 years of age delighted everyone by demonstrating in person how to 'turn cartwheels'.

The boys also produced school plays, with all the practical team work which such an enterprise involves. One year they chose *Hamlet*, translated it into Hindi, orientalist it, and embellished it on their own initiative with topical comic interludes! Another year they chose the well-known Indian drama *Harischandra*, and themselves carried through every detail of the preparation and the public performance. In these activities, as on the river and the playing-fields, the traditional social divisions were simply ignored; what counted were the individual's gifts. The same held good in the election of School prefects. About one third of the boys were Brahmins, another third or more were Hindus of other castes, but they chose as their leaders three Muslims, one Christian, one non-Brahmin Hindu and one Brahmin – in that order. With all this they held their own academically, and were able to send a number of boys on to college at Allahabad or Nagpur, in spite of the fact that Kharraghat was a mile outside the town, and that the prestigious Government High School, centrally situated, attracted all the 'best' boys. Some bad feeling between these 'rival' schools could easily have come about, but this was not allowed to happen. When the Friends school won the hockey shield for the whole Narmada division, and at the same time the Government school won that for cricket,

they celebrated their triumph together, and carried their trophies in a happy joint procession through the town.

All this was good, but there was something more central to a 'free and fearless' Quaker education than any of these things. Already in 1913 the Government itself had raised the question in a public statement:

The most thoughtful minds [it ran] lament the tendency to develop the intellectual at the expense of the moral and religious faculties. . . . The neglect of character training is the most important educational problem of our time.

The problem was not new; Penney had reported 100 years earlier that schooling was being sought as 'a means to wealth'; Syed Ahmed Khan had criticised government colleges which 'left the inner spirit dead'; about 1908 a Christian leader, S. K. Datta, had declared that 'the spirit of selfishness has Indian education in its grip'. The Government's invitation to the public to help to find a better way sparked off a great deal of discussion. Jack himself wrote a number of articles in a widely-read periodical, *The Indian Social Reformer*. He argued that only a basically *religious* education could touch the inward spirit where the roots of character are nourished, and that such an education could best be provided not by government but by local initiative, in schools managed by various religious bodies. Government should encourage them, but should also leave them free. It was much what the Christian leaders of south India had said a few years earlier.

In Hoshangabad therefore vigorous and imaginative Bible study was an integral part of the life of the High School, and gave 'meaning to all the rest'. Jack's interest ranged beyond the High School; was not all the work of Friends in the district, he asked, an attempt in one way or another to offer that 'whole' education? Prem Masih's Bible School, now being run by the Kilbeys, offered a happy combination of biblical study and intelligent interest in the world around. The boys' schools at Balaganj had a teachers' training class. Why not unite them? asked Jack. Why should there be jealousy and division between 'teachers' and 'pastors' when both were really doing the same job?

Moreover, if the values of Jesus were to 'permeate' Indian society there must also be fearless openness to what India had to give, a readiness to listen and to learn. Jack opened himself to the Indian poet-devotees who spoke like St John of 'abiding in love' and of the compassion and forgiveness of a 'Mother' God.<sup>9</sup> When a village headman and the Hindu headmaster together started an 'all-faith library' in the Balaganj school he warmly welcomed their initiative.

All this purposeful hopeful work was carried on in the harsh conditions of the First World War. The High School had been working barely a month when war broke out. Shallow confidence in human 'progress'

was shattered; among Friends and other peace-lovers there was much heart searching. In India the younger English Friends were exempted from military service, but some wondered whether they should not join the Friends' Ambulance Unit, as Joseph Taylor's and Francis Kilbey's sons had done. There were grave financial problems; support for the FFMA in Britain declined by 30%, and in India there were poor harvests and near-famine conditions.

Jack himself had had health problems almost from the beginning. In 1915 an attack of malaria was followed by jaundice, and in his enthusiasm for his work he found it difficult to allow himself the relaxation he needed for full recovery. By the autumn of 1917 he had had nearly five years of strenuous service, and while Helen and their two children were away in the hills he went down with enteric fever. He was nursed through several critical weeks by Gail and Ratcliffe Addison at Makoriya. Recovery was very slow, and he was forbidden to return to his beloved school until the beginning of the new academic year in July 1918. He spent the time in reflection and in writing, and in helping the hard-pressed YMCA as it struggled to meet the demands of the war years.

When Jack took up his school work once more the Government had just published the Montagu-Chelmsford report. This contained proposals for new 'self-governing institutions' for India, including the election of popular representatives to the Legislative Councils. The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, the author of the report, had visited India twice during the preceding years and had shown great sympathy and understanding of the position of such men as Tagore. Jack at once got copies of the document for his senior boys to study, and held a 'citizenship class', wondering whether he was destined to be the teacher of 'a first generation of democratic rulers'. None of those boys, so far as is known, ever did enter the Councils, but one of them, 'Dada' Dharmadhikari, became in later years a distinguished follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and looked back with gratitude to what he had learned as a schoolboy in the Friends' High School at Kharraghat.<sup>10</sup>

Jack also saw 'remarkable parallels between the needs and problems of modern India and those of the Jewish nation at the time of Christ'. He worked out these parallels in a course of Bible study which was published later as *Christ and National Reconstruction*. In the light of Christ, citizenship means unselfish service, and the opportunity for service came with tragic urgency in the influenza epidemic of October to December 1918. For two terrible months the virus devastated India. Millions died; the next census in 1921 showed an overall decrease of population, as compared with 1911, of fully 10%. In the Central Provinces where famine conditions already prevailed<sup>11</sup> many villages were almost wiped out.

When the crises came the Quaker doctors, Hilda Robson and Gail Addison, were both out of India and the Itarsi hospital was closed. Geoffrey Maw opened the dispensary, and he and his helpers treated all comers each morning; in the afternoons, as long as daylight lasted, they visited every village they could reach; after dark there were the Christian families in Khera and Itarsi to be cared for. The Kilbeys at Makoriya did similar work from the village dispensary there. In Hoshangabad the Hoyland family were among the first to catch the infection. They all soon recovered, but the faithful warden of the Kharraghat hostel was among many who died, and in the town the need was desperate.

Jack appealed to his schoolboys for help. 'You have been *talking* about citizenship,' he said, 'Now is your chance to practise it!' Some frankly confessed that they were afraid; others were forbidden to volunteer by their parents. But volunteers there were, and they like Jack himself were soon working 14 hours a day. They went out two by two, carrying medicine by *tonga* or cycle, into the town and the villages around. The poorest and neediest would often refuse their help, for rumour was rife. 'Government,' it was said, was spreading 'the red fever,' and the boys' medicines must be poison! Others however were very grateful; they took the boys with their medicines right into the women's quarters; they insisted on giving them a meal or a hot drink. Florence Taylor sent an appeal for help in Sehore, and two of the best boys went there and had a warm welcome; officials provided a bullock-cart, medicines and someone to introduce them to the villagers.

Jack led other boys to the remoter villages in the Satpura hills. There amid the glorious beauty of the forests was unforgettable human tragedy. The famine-weakened people could neither resist the infection nor even collect a little firewood for warmth in the November chill. The boys, young as they were, worked pluckily through 'a huge black nightmare', sleeping as they could in the fields, often 'with too little straw between them and the ground'. When at last in December the sickness began to abate, one question filled Jack's mind: could *anything* be done to give more lasting help to these poorest and most vulnerable people?

The answer, he thought, was a school – a school planned to meet these people's needs. It would have to offer, first, 'the best traditional teaching in the craftsmanship of each caste occupation'. Then there should be agriculture for all, and 'the right kind of Scripture teaching, and many cooperative activities'. Could not Kalu Ram, the Seoni headmaster do it? He was a gifted teacher, a Rasulia trained carpenter, a keen scout.

A similar emphasis had characterised Quaker education from the earliest years, when Fox and Penn had advised Friends to teach children practical skills – 'building houses or ships, but agriculture is especially in my eye', as Penn put it. Penn's younger contemporary John Bellers agreed.

'Tis labour sustains, maintains and upholds [he wrote.] The hand employed brings profit, the reason used in it makes wise, the will subdued makes them good.

In India it was an idea whose time had come. Tagore was developing a village-based school in Bengal; Gandhi, now back home in Gujarat, was to use his experience in South Africa as the seed-bed for a 'basic national education' based on cooperative useful work.

But Jack's dream remained a dream, for tragedy intervened. At the very end of 1918 Helen Hoyland gave birth to another baby son. At first all went well, but a few days later she developed enteric fever. She died, and the baby did not long survive her. Jack took his two motherless little boys back to England where they were cared for by Helen's family. Then he returned to India, but not to Hoshangabad. That creative enterprise was over.

So for a few years a few hundred boys got a taste of a 'free and fearless' education and a challenge to give themselves in honest and costly public service. The vision and the challenge remain but have not again been embodied in any Indian Quaker school. As the years passed the Boys' High School in Itarsi and the Girls' High School in Sohagpur both developed out of established Middle Schools, and both accepted the prevalent 'bookish' pattern of teaching. The growing practice of requiring a school certificate from those who sought any salaried employment or form of training meant that there was great pressure to conform, especially as so few of the Quaker community were independently self-employed. Much good and faithful work has been done within the pattern, and the Sohagpur school, as a largely residential community, has given generations of girls a happy experience of corporate life and the personal growth it made possible.

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The story of the Bundelkhand mission during the period of the First World War was of a different kind. In 1912 Gorelal took charge of the Friends' School in Harpalpur, so that Pancham Singh and his wife were free to obey their own inward call and to carry their religious message to Chhatarpur town itself. Chhatarpur, like Bhopal city, had been closed to Christian preaching, and the Dewan was strongly opposed to it. At first therefore the two Friends had a difficult time. They could not get a house and were obliged to lodge in the local inn. Pancham Singh went out daily to preach in the streets. He was threatened with jail if he persisted, but he knew that many were listening to him with interest, and he did persist. His courage and patience were rewarded. One day the Maharajah himself



sent for him and told him that no further obstacles would be put in his way; he might rent a house and live in Chhatarpur as long as he wished.

Here is one example of how closely the threads of Quaker work were woven into the 'human tapestry' of Indian history. When the Maharajah was a boy in the 1880's his tutor was a young Englishman named Theodore Morison. Morison had been a Cambridge friend of Theodore Beck, and in view of the close links between Aligarh and the Rajput states of Bundelkhand it is probable that Beck had had a hand in his appointment. Morrison seems to have encouraged the young ruler's religious and philosophical curiosity, a trait which Lowes Dickinson, the Cambridge Apostle who visited India in 1912, noticed and commented on:

When he couldn't sleep he sent for his cook to talk philosophy and religion with him. That, at least, is democratic in a way inconceivable anywhere in the West.<sup>12</sup>

It is in character that the Maharajah should intervene to protect Pancham Singh from the hostility of his own *Dewan*. A year or two later, finding Friends at one of the great festivals at Khajarah, <sup>13</sup> he got a large marquee erected so that they might show their lantern slides of the life of Jesus in comfort to the crowds who came. Pancham Singh's entry into Chhatarpur was to prove a turning point in the life of the mission.

In 1915 the stringency which had marked 1914 suddenly gave way to prosperity. A boom in the American economy was reflected in increased support of the mission, both by regular contributions and by a substantial legacy for Bundelkhand. In Harpalpur the school got a badly needed new building, part of the cost of which was met by the friendly Rajah, who also paid part of Gorelal's salary. The dispensary too was enlarged, so that patients could stay overnight if need be, and a small chapel was built.

Meanwhile Carrie Wood returned to her quiet work in Nowgong. Margaret Smith trained girls and young women to do useful and beautiful needlework for sale, and the young men's industrial school continued to be a profitable enterprise. The famine conditions of 1918 were met by food-for-work projects much like those set up by British Friends during earlier famines. Then came the influenza epidemic, and 70 members of the Christian community of less than 200 caught the infection. The three women missionaries suspended other work and gave their whole time to nursing the sick, and with this intensive personal care all but two recovered.

As 1919 dawned there was a spirit of forward-looking hopefulness. In March the Maharajah again showed his friendliness by giving Esther Baird an outright gift of land on the outskirts of Chhatarpur. She at once decided to use it for a first step towards the women's hospital which the Maharajah and the mission both desired. With the assistance of Margaret Smith and Pancham Singh she planned and built a bungalow for a future woman

doctor. Before the end of the year the mission had its first automobile, which brought Harpalpur and Chhatarpur within easy reach of Nowgong.

In Hoshangabad there was little hopefulness. The Rasulia Works were already closed; Alice Swan's village girls' industrial school was soon closed too. Alice had nursed her girls safely through the influenza, but there were no more funds. The Kilbeys' lively Bible School suffered the same fate. 'Uncle' Alfred kept the High School going until a new man, Perry Pryce, arrived at the end of 1919. He did an excellent job, and once more in 1921 the boys won the Narmada Division hockey shield. But then Pryce withdrew to marry and undertake educational work elsewhere; his successor John Douglas suffered serious ill health, and the High School was finally given up. When the winds of change began to blow, as they did, they blew from a different quarter.

### *Notes to Chapter XIII*

1 These phrases were used by Rendel Harris, Woodbrooke's first Director of Studies.

2 Thomas B. Hodgkin was a nephew of that Thomas Hodgkin who had befriended the Indian visitors to London Yearly Meeting in 1861.

3 Tregelles Fox was connected with the lively Friends group at Stoke Newington. His mother was an Allen.

4 Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 1896, a historical account of the way in which the religion was propagated.

5 Arnold refers to Allnut's friendship and help in his preface to the second edition of the above book, 1913.

6 Brooke Foss Westcott, *Social Aspects of Christianity*, 1887, p.128.

7 A hundred years before the great William Carey had suggested that such a conference should be held in 1810 in Cape Town, but the idea had been dismissed as 'a pleasant dream'. Carey went ahead and carried it out in India, where he found 'the utmost harmony ...a union of hearts'.

8 This and many other details of J.S.Hoyland's life are derived from letters to his father which have been preserved by his daughter Rachel Gilliatt, who has kindly permitted their use. Others are derived from Hoyland's own contributions to Quaker periodicals.

9 Whoever knows that love itself is God  
Shall dwell in love, one with God.

TIRUMOOLAR, EIGHTH CENTURY.

How often have I sinned against Thee!  
 Yet fondly Thou callest me, O Mother,  
 Come unto me, Thou callest.  
 Forgiving all transgressions, Thou callest.  
 KABIR. 4

10 Dada Dharmadhikari's personal letter to the author.

11 It was reliably reported that the reason why famine was not officially declared was that in the difficult year 1918 Government would have been unable to fulfil its obligations under the famine code.

12 G.Lowes Dickinson, *Autobiography*, 1973, p.180.

13 The magnificently sculptured temples of Khajarahho are the family shrine of the rulers of Chhatarpur.

## CHAPTER XIV

### Sadhus and Pilgrims

*A life close to the Gospel, full of peace and blessedness.*

JOHN SOMERVELL HOYLAND, 1916

WHILE JACK HOYLAND was re-creating the Friends High School, his friend Geoffrey Maw had been doing well and faithfully the tasks allotted to him in the mission. For him they were 'a necessary drudgery'; he found nothing to fire his spirit as Jack's had been fired by his work among the schoolboys. 'I have not found my niche,' he said to Jack before he and Mildred left for furlough in 1916. 'Perhaps I should not return.' Jack urged him to leave the matter open, and in the autumn of 1917 he did return, but alone. It did not seem right that Mildred and their two little children should travel in war conditions, and in fact Geoffrey's ship was in grave danger from enemy submarines as it passed through the Mediterranean.

Having reached the safer waters of the Red Sea passengers and crew celebrated their escape from disaster. There was a party, and 'toasts' were drunk. The speaker who proposed the toast of gratitude to their military escort used the opportunity to abuse 'conchies' (conscientious objectors to military service) and to call them 'cowards'. Geoffrey therefore remained seated and did not drink, and his fellow passengers angrily demanded an explanation.

I honour the courage of the army as much as you do [he replied], but I know that 'conchies' are *not* cowards, and I cannot approve of what was said.

For the rest of the voyage people refused to speak to him; he occupied himself with the books he had brought with him, and found in them a pointer to his own future service.

One of these books, *The Love of God*, was by a young American named Samuel Evans Stokes. Stokes' ancestors, in 1677, had been among the very first Quaker pioneers in New Jersey, where they had prospered. A

Stokes of a later generation, and his Quaker cousin Anna Evans, wished to be married, but because of their kinship the Elders of the Meeting refused permission. After much patient but unsuccessful effort to persuade them to change their minds the young couple married 'out of Meeting' and were disowned. They joined the Episcopal Church, but like many others with a similar history they kept their pride in their Quaker traditions.

Samuel Evans Stokes was born in 1882. As a schoolboy he was much distressed by preachers who threatened 'unbelievers' with the fires of hell. He himself was trying to follow Jesus, but he was troubled about what might happen to his schoolmates. Then there came to him a vision of the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, and along with it a voice saying over and over again, 'until he *find* it, until he *find* it . . .'. The vision and voice brought comfort.

In the summer of 1903 Stokes, now a university student, met a Dr Carleton who had started a leprosy sanatorium at Sabathu in the Simla Hills. He was so much impressed by the needs of the work that he abandoned his studies and went to India to do what he could to help. He arrived early in 1904 (at about the same time as did C. F. Andrews) and during that summer he explored the Simla hills. Simla itself was only 17 miles from Sabathu by the short cuts. Fifty miles beyond Simla was Kotgarh, an old Moravian mission centre. Stokes found his way there, visited the mission school, and met a Mrs Bates, the widow of a tea planter who owned a large estate at Bhareri, not far away. But when he tried to make friends with the peasant farmers of the hills he came up against an invisible barrier. In their eyes he was a 'white sahib' a member of the ruling race; they were polite, but they kept their distance.

Stokes longed to find a way to break through this barrier, and once more, as in his boyhood, a 'vision' came to his aid. He was walking alone along a mountain road when he found Jesus walking beside him, travel-stained as with the dust of Palestine. It seemed to him that his Master was calling him to go out, as the first apostles had done, 'taking nothing for his journey'.

During the following months, pondering his vision as he worked in Sabathu, Stokes was joined by a young Sikh named Sunder Singh, who had been driven from his village because he had declared himself a Christian. Here, Stokes found, was a kindred spirit, for Sunder Singh also felt called to the life of a *sadhu*. In 1905 they went together to Simla, where Sunder Singh was baptised; after the ceremony he put on the *Sadhu's* robe and went his own way.

In the Christian tradition there have always been such 'renouncers', and successors of the Desert Fathers and of St Francis of Assisi had already been known in India. Thomas Valpy French had sought out the Hindu

*sadhus* ('seekers of Reality') and the *sanmyasis* (those 'emptied' of possession), and the *pirs* and *fakirs* honoured in Islam. Charles Gayford had met Indian *sadhu*-Christians at the Barman *mela*, and Prabhu Dayal Misra had continued to live the *sadhu's* life after he became a Friend. Some of the finest men who had joined Friends in Seoni and Sohagpur came from the same tradition, like the Fakir Ibrahim in Seoni.

Stokes himself spent much of the remainder of 1905 helping with earthquake relief in the Kangra valley. Then in the spring of 1906 he returned to Kotgarh, where he discovered a cave among the rocks below the Kotgarh-Bhareri road. This, he decided, should be his hermitage, and Sunder Singh soon joined him there. The two young men travelled the hills in their *sadhu's* robes, wearing a cross and a rosary, and giving their Christian message. It was a hard life but a joyful one, for Stokes found that the barriers which had separated him from the people were gone; they now sought him out, invited him to their homes, and opened their hearts. 'The *sadhu*,' he wrote, 'finds doors open everywhere, and comes in contact with men of every caste and school of thought.'

Then came months of strenuous practical service, for in 1907 the Punjab suffered much from epidemics of plague and smallpox. Stokes and Sunder Singh devoted themselves to the sufferers from small-pox. These were isolated in a 'pest-camp' where conditions were so appalling that local Sikhs asked in amazement where the two *sadhus* found the strength to persevere. Five destitute children were taken into the hermitage-cave at Kotgarh, and Stokes began to dream of a Children's Home, built on some corner of Mrs Bates' land. Such dreams might be realised because although he spent nothing on himself he could call on family wealth when he felt it right to do so.

By the beginning of 1908 however Stokes had a larger dream: might there not be an Order of Friars, who should devote themselves to the service of the poor in India as the Little Brothers of St Francis had done in Italy? Bishop Lefroy of Lahore listened to him with friendly sympathy, and encouraged him to put his ideas before the Pan-Anglican conference which was due to meet in London that summer. Stokes did so, and went on from London to pay a visit to his family in Moorestown, New Jersey. *The Love of God* was written and published, and had many readers.

During 1909 much thought was given to the proposed *Brotherhood of the Imitation of Christ* (the choice of name once more echoing that on-going Quaker love for Thomas à Kempis). It appealed strongly to C. F. Andrews, who had met Stokes and Sunder Singh during a holiday spent with Mrs Bates in the summer of 1907. It appealed also to another member of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, F. J. Western.<sup>1</sup> As the four men talked it over it became clear that Sunder Singh must be free to follow his own

vocation unbound by any Rule; Andrews also finally decided not to join. So when Bishop Lefroy inaugurated the Brotherhood early in 1910 its only members were Stokes and Western, and within a year Stokes himself, the originator of the idea, had begun to question his vocation. The life of a *sadhu* had indeed broken down barriers, but it had raised others which he had not foreseen. For many people believed that a truly religious life could only be lived by those who were free from 'the net of worldly affairs'. Indian tradition regarded boyhood and youth as a time of disciplined preparation<sup>2</sup> for the responsibilities of the married 'householder'; only when these had been fulfilled might one free oneself from 'the net' and turn to the religious life – though it was also recognised that there have always been a few (like Sadhu Sunder Singh) whose special vocation is life-long celibacy and *sannyas*.

At first Stokes thought that he had this special vocation, but as time went on he felt it to be a barrier between him and the people. He shared his thoughts with Western. 'In the mystery which we call Incarnation,' he wrote, 'all that is essentially human has become of God.'<sup>3</sup> Should he not live out his loyalty to Christ in the midst of 'the world', like the Quaker farmers, doctors and business men who were his ancestors? At 29 he had had a long and varied 'apprenticeship'; it was time to become a householder and undertake family responsibilities as his farmer neighbours in Kotgarh did.

Stokes sought and found a bride among the people of the Kotgarh district, his second home. She was a Christian girl named Agnes; her parents consented to the match, Stokes' mother visited and made friends with her, and in 1912 they were married. From then on Stokes became in effect an Indian among Indians. He used his inherited wealth to buy from Mrs Bates a good tract of land, and built his new home in the local style. Only its name, 'Harmony Hall', was an echo of his American past; it was the name of that Quaker home which his ancestors had built in Moorestown almost two centuries before. The record of his life there belongs to a later part of this story.

Meanwhile *The Love of God* had been reprinted several times, and the edition of 1912 included an account both of Stokes' life as a *sadhu* and of the reasons why he had given it up. It was this edition that had come into Geoffrey Maw's hands, and it is easy to imagine how deeply it interested him. He knew that soon after he himself had left for England in 1916 Jack Hoyland had met Sunder Singh in Kotgarh, and had invited him to come to Hoshangabad for the Golden Jubilee of Rachel Metcalfe's arrival in India in 1866, which was to be celebrated at the end of the year. Sunder Singh came, and made a deep impression both on Jack's High

School boys and on the general public; Hindu and Muslim alike crowded into the big Friends Meeting House and hung on his words.

When Geoffrey got back to Hoshangabad Jack was on sick leave, but as soon as they could the two friends had long talks, and agreed that the special witness of the *sadhu* was one much needed in the Christian community. Besides *The Love of God* Geoffrey had also read another account of experience as a Christian *sadhu* by an Englishman called Sherwood.

I know him, [Jack responded]. He was my junior at Cambridge, and I met him in Kotgarh in the summer of 1916. He came to lunch with me one day and told me all about his work.<sup>4</sup>

Before any further steps could be taken, however, they were both overwhelmed by the influenza epidemic and the tragedy which ended Jack's service in Hoshangabad. Geoffrey had had his own disappointments. He had greatly hoped that on his return he might carry the Gospel message to Bhopal city, but the Begum would not allow any male missionary to reside there and he needed a house for Mildred and the children when they returned (as they did early in 1919). Friends therefore posted him in Itarsi as 'care-taker' of the Robsons' work during their absence on leave.

One day in June 1918 Geoffrey climbed the 'Itarsi Peak', which rises steeply to over 2,000 feet from the forests south of the town. The first monsoon showers had fallen, ferns and orchids were growing in the crevices of the rocks, the air was clear. Standing on the summit he surveyed his parish – southward through the hills to the borders of Betul District, northward to the Narmada Valley and the first spurs of the Vindhya, westward to Seoni (the roof of the Friends bungalow at Makoriya clearly visible 10 miles away), and eastward to Sohagpur. At his feet he could see 'every house in Itarsi'. It was a difficult parish. The Meetings for Worship seemed 'dead', and Sohagpur was a source of special anxiety. The Jubilee had been marked by the opening of the 'Rachel Metcalfe Home' for needy women, and the wise and sensitive Louise Walker was in charge. But ever since Geoffrey returned she and her charges had been subjected to much malicious harassment by 'Christian' youths in the town. The 'rot' had set in much earlier; even before Geoffrey had left for England in 1916 one of his young Indian colleagues, Khushilal, had commented that the people had 'the Christ of the New Testament', but what they needed was the 'living Christ'.

Yet while Geoffrey was labouring through the influenza epidemic the 'living Christ' was at work in ways he did not know. In the weavers' community at Khera were two young men, Pyarelal and Jagannath, who had been little boys when Geoffrey first arrived in India in 1910. He had made friends with them then, and they had helped him to learn Hindi. Now, when the 'red fever' of 1918 was bringing fear and death, Jagannath

gathered the young children of the community for prayer. At first they met in secret, then Pyarelal found them and joined them, and soon the children's prayer meetings, no longer secret, filled the little Khera Meeting House. When Khushilal heard about them, he came to Geoffrey with two others, Sunderlal (Samuel Harry) of Sohagpur and Kampta Presad of Hoshangabad, who two or three years earlier had been awakened spiritually by Jack Hoyland's summer camps at the Kharraghat High School.

The little group prayed together, and then called a meeting of their fellow-Friends and spoke as they were moved. The outcome early in 1919, was a genuine spiritual revival, especially in the weaver community and in Samuel Harry's home Meeting at Sohagpur. In Khera it showed itself in a new spirit of generous and good-tempered common work, an unselfish readiness to spend long hours on tedious but necessary jobs. In Sohagpur the Rachel Metcalfe Home suffered no more harassment; on the contrary it received much practical voluntary help from local Friends. There were many emotional scenes of repentance and confession, but Khushilal was quick to rebuke mere emotionalism. He and Geoffrey, who was only a year or two older, became very close friends, and during the following months they devoted most of their time to nurturing these seeds of the Spirit in the local Meetings. In October, during the Diwali holiday, they invited people from other missions to share their experience. Some Indian Friends who came from Nowgong were much impressed, and Louise Walker herself visited Nowgong to follow up the contact.

Khushilal was then a man of about 30. He had been born, probably in 1888, in the village of Bagtra on the north side of the Narmada in the territory of Bhopal State. His father was famous for many miles round as a *parihar*, one who had power over the 'Spirit' whose shrine stood within the walls of their home, and whose cult had a great hold on the local people. There were *parihars* in many villages both north and south of the river. The tradition ran in families, and had some affinity with the mediaeval European belief in the 'familiar spirits' of sorcerers and witches.

When Khushilal was a boy, the spirit from time to time 'came into his head', giving him a compulsion to eat dirt and so on. This demon, as he told his own sons later, was finally exorcised by one of the Christian Friends. The Friends did not work on the north side of the river, but there was a great deal of coming and going between the north and the south banks. The villages on both sides had all once been part of an old Gond kingdom, and there was a lot of intermarriage between them. Khushilal's own sister had married into a family on the south side, in Shobhapur not far from Sohagpur. It is likely that Khushilal experienced this exorcism and healing in 1902 when he was about 13 or 14 years old. In his gratitude he determined to become a Christian, and the Friends sent him to their farm settlement-school at Lahi.

Lahi during those years was a lively place. Devlal, the man in charge, was himself from Bhopal State, where he had done excellent work for Friends on their farm in Sehore. There were about 70 adolescent boys who were being educated and trained in farming skills. Khushilal soon showed himself to be intellectually gifted, and a few years later he went on from there to Prem Masih's Bible School, and so began his religious service in the Friends Mission. He brought to it his own Sanskrit culture, a deep spiritual experience, an open attractive way of speaking, and 'the most infectious laugh in the whole of the Central Provinces'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1919 Geoffrey, the 'born doctor', was reflecting much on what he had read of Stokes' service to the sick, as well as on the power of the Spirit shown in the revival. He also thought about the possible 'diffuseness' of the *sadhu's* witness, and came to the conclusion that the usual pattern of village preaching by missionaries was equally diffuse. He and Khushilal, along with several others, therefore planned a new kind of village camp – they would stay in one village, not just for a night or two, but for a full six weeks, and see what happened. The village they chose was Bardha at the southern end of the district, over 20 miles from Itarsi. Outside the village was a big banyan tree, said to be the home of a powerful demon who particularly disliked egg-eaters. Here they pitched their camp and ate their eggs, while the villagers watched to see what disaster would befall them. Five weeks passed, they came to no harm, and interest in their message and their books increased.

Then, towards the end of the sixth week, Khushilal was seized with severe pain in the stomach, on which Geoffrey's medicines had no effect. Geoffrey thought of how, as is recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the disciples of Jesus had exercised powers of healing in Jesus' name, as he himself had done during his lifetime. Should not the same divine power operate still? He laid his hands on Khushilal and prayed earnestly; suddenly and completely the pain disappeared.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the six weeks the rest of the team returned to Itarsi, but Geoffrey and Khushilal with a third friend, Dharmasevak, stayed on. More healings followed. One day they came upon a man who was crouching over a little fire by the roadside and shivering with fever; with his consent they laid their hands on him and prayed, and then continued on their way. 'They took my fever away with them,' declared the man to his fellow-villagers, 'and it hasn't come back!' Then there was the village barber whose trouble was 'demon-possession'; he too was healed. Then one evening the Friends were called to the home of a Brahmin family who had previously ignored them. A little boy lay seemingly close to death; the Ayurvedic doctor had given up hope of a cure. They prayed long and lovingly with the near-despairing parents, but when late at night they withdrew to their camp

there had been no visible change, and they dreaded the news the morning might bring. Soon after sunrise people came running to call them; the little boy was playing happily in the courtyard of his home.

In the records of Geoffrey's life there are hints of other such healings, though later he rarely spoke of them. He was grateful to have a channel of healing power, but these experiences did not lead him to neglect the 'ordinary' medical skills which he possessed, and which he used always with loving prayer for his patients.

Shortly after the long camp at Bardha Geoffrey and Khushilal decided to visit Khushilal's home district on the north bank of the Narmada. In January 1920, starting from Bankheri in the extreme east of the Hoshangabad District, they crossed the river by the ferry at Khedgaon, and spent three weeks travelling in *sadhu's* robes through the villages and little towns in that part of Bhopal State. They encountered much suspicion: were they bogus *sadhus* spying out the land for their robber confederates? or criminals on the run? or perhaps policemen in disguise?

If I really were in the secret police [wrote Geoffrey whimsically], I should have excellent opportunities. Finger-prints for example. There are few better recorders than the shiny surface of a freshly-peeled egg, standard hospitality in these parts.

There were however some friendly educated officials, and as they travelled westward they came to a large village where a man ran up to them and greeted Khushilal warmly. He was a merchant from Bagtra who had known Khushilal from childhood and who had at first been very angry with him for becoming a Christian. Later however he had been healed of a sickness by Khushilal's prayers and had become his firm friend. Even while they were talking another man approached. 'Panditji!' said Khushilal, giving him a respectful greeting – for this man had once been his Sanskrit teacher. But they did not go on to Bagtra itself; after they had come about 25 miles downstream from Khedgaon they crossed the river again and made straight for Sohagpur. They had at least prepared the way for a more friendly reception next time.

'Next time' did not come for another year; the ever-present 'drudgery' claimed most of Geoffrey's attention. He did pay another visit to Bardha and was able to exorcise a 'spirit' from a Christian woman there. 'She was in perfect health,' he reported. 'It was *not* a case of epilepsy.' In February 1921, with Khushilal and Dharmasevak, he crossed the Narmada again. This time they crossed at Hoshangabad and travelled upstream on the Bhopal side towards the area they had visited the previous year. So they came to Bagtra, and had a very warm welcome from Khushilal's family. Khushilal had once sought them out 10 years earlier, and they had rejected him harshly, but in the meanwhile his merchant friend

had persuaded them to change their minds. The family shrine was still here, the *parihar* tradition was still active, but friendly listening had replaced hostility. Both the family and the people in general readily accepted Geoffrey as a fellow-*sadhu*; very few, apart from the educated officials, recognised him as an Englishman.

Once in 12 years a great religious festival, the *Sinhast mela*, takes place at Ujjain, one of the most ancient and sacred cities in central India. In the third century before Christ (and many centuries before Greenwich!) Ujjain had been reckoned the zero meridian of the world. Ascetics and pilgrims from both the main Hindu traditions gather at the *mela*, which fell due in 1921. Geoffrey and Khushilal spent a few days there, among the *sannyasis* who were worshippers of Shiva. When the 12 years had passed, in 1933, they returned and made friends with some of the *bairagis*, the devotees of Vishnu. Many of the *sannyasis* were open-minded men who sympathised with Gandhi's campaign for the 'untouchables', while the *bairagis* were stout defenders of traditional orthodoxy. The two Quakers listened to both parties, trying to respond to 'light and truth' in each position.

It was natural that Geoffrey Maw's thoughts should turn to pilgrimage. Living in the Narmada Valley he continually encountered the *parikrama-basis* (the 'dwellers on the circuit') who were circum-ambulating the whole course of the holy river, from source to mouth and back again, a pilgrimage of over 1,700 miles. Everyone in the Hoshangabad District knew of the great annual pilgrimage to the mountain shrine beyond Pachmarhi, for the worship of Mahadeo, the 'Great God' of George Swan's aboriginal friends; everyone knew of the *mela* on the November full-moon day at Bandrabhan where the Tawa river joins the Narmada.<sup>7</sup> All along the banks of the Narmada itself were little shelters or caves where lived true 'renouncers'. As Geoffrey wrote long afterwards, he was moved by the 'inward glory' of their lives:

The more I discovered the haunts and hiding-places of *sadhus* and ascetics, and found among them truly devout men and women who had renounced the world and all its attractions, the more strongly I felt the urge to turn my back on the rush and worry and excitement of the modern world, pick up a little bundle of a change of clothes and a blanket, and with staff in one hand and brass *lota* in the other forsake all else and follow the well-worn footpath.

He was soon longing to share in the greatest pilgrimage of all, those to the sources of the Ganges ('Mother Ganga') in the central Himalayas, to Badrinath, Kedarnath and Gangotri.<sup>8</sup> In the summer of 1923 the



opportunity came. Mildred had gone back to England with the children, and Geoffrey and Khushilal joined the pilgrimage throngs who travelled from Hardwar, where Ganga emerges into the plains, up through the Himalayan gorges for 225 miles to Badrinath and beyond.

The adventure caught the imagination of the mid-India Friends, who gave Geoffrey a new set of *sadhu's* clothes – saffron-coloured turban, shirt and *dhoti* (waist-cloth). Geoffrey's attempts to wind the turban round his head met with no approval from his friend. 'You look like an unemployed waiter,' declared Khushilal, and set to work to do the job properly. One end of the cloth became a jaunty 'cock's comb' on Geoffrey's head, the other hung down his back to protect his spine from the sun. He also wore a chain with a plain cross, thus proclaiming openly but wordlessly where his allegiance lay. He found that this gave no offence; his fellow-pilgrims accepted him as one of themselves.

Very occasionally there were suspicions, as among the Bhopal villages, that he might be 'a government spy'. On one occasion an unfriendly 'nationalist' accused him to his face of being 'an informer in disguise'. 'Why disguise?' asked Geoffrey, speaking in Hindi for the benefit of other listeners. 'It's obvious that I am English. Have you ever noticed any Indians wearing *European* dress? Would you say *they* were in disguise, or informers? One of the bystanders suddenly doubled up with laughter, and Geoffrey understood why when he later met his accuser wearing 'European dress' himself!

Ancient religious tradition enjoined that a pilgrimage should be made 'on foot, with joy, in the company of worthy people'. 'Something precious has been lost,' Geoffrey was to write 25 years later,

... now that a motor-road has been driven as far as Badrinath. The humble pilgrims who still travel on foot must cling to crevices in the rocks and inhale petrol fumes and clouds of dust.<sup>9</sup>

But in 1923 the motor-road was undreamed of; he and Khushilal shared in the long trek with its spiritual exaltation, its hardships and its risks. (In 1923 'the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag'<sup>10</sup> was still at large on the pilgrim route.) They felt themselves to be 'in the company of worthy people', for the simple common folk with whom they shared the journey were full of courage and patience, of goodwill and mutual helpfulness.

As they made friends on the road and at the halting-places there were many opportunities to speak, as one friend to another, of what they owed to Christ. One such friend was Ram Sarikh Singh, who spent every summer in his little hermitage at Badrinath. Ram Sarikh had begun life as a door-keeper in a Calcutta business-house. He was

entirely self-taught and had read widely. He had inclined to atheism, but an experience he called 'a vision' had brought him faith. The two Quakers met him at Badrinath in 1923 and worshipped daily with him in silence. During the years that followed they exchanged letters and in 1930 they were able to make the pilgrimage again. This time they reached Badrinath in the company of other *sadhus* whom they had met on the way, and invited Ram Sarikh to tea with these new friends on the mountainside. 'Here we are all guests of Jesus Christ,' said Ram Sarikh. 'I salute Him, but I do not yet *know* Him.' In 1934 they went again. Ram Sarikh was overjoyed to see them, for he had great news: he had 'received the initiation of Jesus Christ', and he *knew*.

As for the simple humble pilgrims, they had often saved for a lifetime to meet the cost of this one journey. Geoffrey was angered to see how they were treated by the *pandas*, the professional Brahmin guides; these men were often quite merciless towards the poor and extracted from them every coin they could. Yet there was compassion and honesty to be found even among the *pandas*, and when Geoffrey met it he recorded it with pleasure. On one occasion Khushilal had been left behind in hospital at one of the halting-places, Geoffrey was struggling alone up the last steep slope to Badrinath. He was shivering with malaria, stung by a fierce hailstorm, and feeling 'just about at the end of his tether'. A party of *pandas* overtook him and looked at him. They stopped. One of them took off his own coat and put it round Geoffrey's shoulders, another took his knapsack and carried it for him. They supported him up the slope, took him to an inn, brought blankets and hot tea, and saw him comfortably settled. Pure, disinterested human kindness!

Geoffrey's love for pilgrim-seekers led him to other places, to Allahabad for the *Kumbh-mela*, a 12th year festival like the *Sinhast-mela* at Ujjain; to the ice-cave of Amarnath among the mountains of Kashmir; to the pilgrim centres along his own beloved Narmada river. Finally, during his last months in India he visited the sacred source of the Narmada itself, in the company of another sensitive *sadhu* whom like Ram Sarikh he had met at Badrinath. He used his camera skillfully to record what he saw, and the camera still opened the way to new friendships. Outwardly he made no 'converts'; inwardly many lives besides his own were enriched, and there were some who saw in his life that Indian ideal, *nishkama Karma* ('action without desire') whose spirit is reflected in the prayer of St Ignatius Loyola 'to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will'.

Geoffrey's vision from Itarsi Peak in 1918, when the land had lain before him in the clarity that follows the first monsoon showers, was symbolic of much of his later travels among immensely greater peaks

and wider vistas. On that day he had rejoiced in the ferns and flowers at his feet; on all his journeyings he rejoiced in the wealth of wayside flowers and the life of the wild creatures, as well as in the glorious scenery. There was a poem whose words he made his own:

I may not grudge the little left undone.  
I keep the dreams, I hold the heights I won.

The whole poem has survived among his papers, lovingly transcribed in his own beautiful calligraphy. This skill of his added clarity and dignity even to the mission account books – a form of ‘drudgery’ which often fell to his lot because of his early training in a bank.

Geoffrey used this craftsmanship, very joyfully, on the words of great passages of prayer and meditation. One of these, a clear and lovely transcript of St Paul’s Hymn of Love, hung for many years on the wall of the Meeting Room at the Quaker Centre in Delhi. The words were read, reflected on and treasured by men and women of many religious traditions, most of whom knew little or nothing of St Paul, and who probably gave no thought at all to the man who had set his words before them. That too was *nishkama Karma*, selfless service.

Geoffrey Maw and Samuel Stokes were neither the first nor the last Quakers to value the vocation of the *sadhu*. Prabhu Dayal Misra had been before them; in later generations other Quakers have sought out Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry and Sri Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai, and paid tribute to their wisdom, compassion and spiritual power. During the decades following the Second World War another Quaker *sadhu*, Gurdial Mallik, enriched the lives of many people in India and elsewhere. He lived a life of consecrated vagabondage, ready to go anywhere ‘at the drop of hat’ in response to human need. Always he shared the suffering, yet he carried with him laughter as joyous and infectious as Khushilal’s before him.

Gurdial loved to name those to whom he owed most: N. G. Chandavarkar, his teacher in Bombay; C. F. Andrews to whom Chandavarkar had introduced him; Rabindranath Tagore; Mahatma Gandhi. A powerful part of Gandhi’s appeal, both to him and to the common people of India, was that of the ‘renouncer’. A well-known story tells how a journalist once challenged Gandhi to put his philosophy ‘in five words only’. ‘Five words?’ smiled Gandhi. ‘Three will do: renounce, and enjoy.’ Gandhi’s merry laughter held a whole-hearted enjoyment which was not forgotten by those who were privileged to share it.

## Notes to Chapter XIV

- 1 F.J. Western later became a much-loved Bishop of the Indian church.
- 2 The discipline was called *brahmacharya* and included celibacy, with which the word is often identified.
- 3 Compare the words of Rabindranath Tagore: ‘Our God has joyfully taken on Himself the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.’
- 4 Jack gave further details in a letter to his father dated 3rd May 1916: ‘He wears a *pagri* (turban) and a long khaki cassock and rope, and bare feet and sandals, and carries a blanket and a package of food and a *huqah* (‘hubble-bubble’). He says he gets an exceedingly good hearing, though it is a rough life. ... The people treat him with great courtesy, fetching water and cooking for him. He smokes his *huqah* with them and tells them about Christ.’ (The *huqah* is passed sociably from hand to hand.)
- The author has been unable to trace Sherwood in Cambridge; he may have left without taking a degree. Nor has it been possible to trace the pamphlet seen by Geoffrey Maw. Many Sherwoods held civil or military posts in India about the turn of the century; he may have belonged to one such family.
- 5 Description by Amy Montford who met Khushilal in 1927.
- 6 This and other details of work in Bordha and Bhopal are found in Geoffrey Maw’s letter preserved in Friends House Library, London.
- 7 The Tawa flows into the Narmada from the south about six miles above Hoshangabad.
- 8 The Ganga is formed of three rivers, Bhagirathi, Mandakini and Alaknanda, and is named Ganga only below the confluences where these unite.
- 9 In 1948 the road was open except for the last 50 miles. On Geoffrey’s last visit in that year he travelled by bus because of his lameness.
- 10 Jim Corbett’s book of that title tells of his own efforts, finally successful, to free the district of this scourge.

## CHAPTER XV

## Kotgarh and Nagpur : 1920 to 1927

*Only a nation that is disinterested can be trusted. And of the temple we have to build trust is the cornerstone.*

G. LOWES DICKINSON, *THE CHOICE BEFORE US* (1917)

BY 1920 GANDHI had become a significant figure in Indian public life. He had returned home from South Africa early in 1915, and had gone to Gokhale for his apprenticeship to Indian public service. The next few years saw the accomplishment, in part, of some of the things which Gokhale had worked for, though he himself did not live to see it. By 1920 indentured labour overseas was ended – but forms of near-slavery persisted in India itself; the constitutional reforms planned by the popular Montagu promised real political advance – but provision for the people's participation in local government, urged by Plowden, Wood and Gokhale alike, was still inadequate. And by 1920 other actions of the Government had forfeited the people's trust. In 1918 the repressive provision of the Rowlatt Acts brought bitter disappointment and wide-spread public protest; in April 1919 Government forces opened fire on unarmed demonstrators trapped in the enclosed Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar. That action, and the humiliations which followed, turned disappointment into hatred.

Gandhi, who like Gokhale had believed in co-operation, now became a determined non-cooperator, and his influence in India rapidly increased. In September 1920 the Indian National Congress held a special session in Calcutta to decide whether or not it should cooperate with the new Councils. Most of the older leaders wished to do so; Gandhi called for a boycott both of the Councils and of the Law Courts and the recognised educational institutions. Gandhi carried the day and the boycott was launched. One result was that Samuel Stokes, the Kotgarh 'householder', became for a time a public figure. In 1915 Stokes had taken his family to the United States, where he learned all he could about apple cultivation, in the hope that diversified farming might prove useful in Kotgarh. He

also made a thorough study of his Quaker ancestors: Thomas Stokes who in the 1660's had been imprisoned as a Friend in an English jail; the poor Welsh farmers, forefathers of the Evans family, who 'refused to do what they considered wrong and suffered greatly for conscience' sake'.<sup>1</sup> These were the things he taught his growing children to admire; their family wealth, he said, was a serious responsibility, to be used for 'honourable service and the privilege of helpfulness'. He felt himself to be what Gandhi would have called a trustee, both for his material possessions and for the spiritual treasures of his Quaker ancestry. From 1916 onwards he tried to exercise this trusteeship in his life in Kotgarh.

He soon became aware that there was a challenge in Kotgarh to refuse to do what was 'considered wrong'. For many centuries the local chieftains of the Simla hills had received from their subjects a service known as *begar*, which meant that the people of a village where the Rajah stayed on his travels were required to carry his camp-kit to the next village on his tour. On this small local scale the service was not onerous, but after 1814 when the British took over the administration it became a heavy burden. Villages were compelled to work not only for administration officers but also for the postal, public works and forest departments, and even for officials and private individuals on pleasure trips and sporting excursions. This could mean great hardship, especially at times when their own fields urgently needed their whole attention.

Stokes therefore decided that it was his duty to fight this injustice on behalf of those who were 'unable in their ignorance to defend themselves'. Only constitutional means should be used, but these might include passive resistance, which like Martin Wood he defined as willingly accepted suffering. 'We should conquer,' he wrote, 'by enduring, not by force.'

The first step was not difficult. By 1917 Stokes was a naturalised British citizen, respected by Government and people alike. A friendly official helped him to secure an agreement that the rate of pay for *begar* should be doubled, which meant that less *begar* was demanded for frivolous reasons. That was only a beginning; to do more he needed united and determined popular support, and he found it in Kotgarh.

In September 1920, just as the Indian National Congress was meeting in Calcutta, the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford made a pleasure trip from Simla to Baghi. It was a time when the peasants should have been free to prepare and sow their fields for the precious winter crop, yet thousands of them, poor as they were, were taken from their work to minister to the Viceroy's comfort. The time had come to act. Stokes described the situation in an article in Gandhi's weekly *Young India*.<sup>2</sup> Then he drew up a monster petition, got it signed by every peasant in the Kotgarh area, and presented it to the local authorities at the end of November. It stated courteously but

clearly that after the end of March 1921 – four months ahead – the people would refuse all *begar* whatsoever except for administrative officials on duty. They would continue to work for such officials until other arrangements could be made, but only on conditions: lists of their schedules must be posted where the people could easily see them; any supplies they needed must be paid for direct, cash down, at fair rates, and not through any ‘middle-man’. They were safeguards which bitter experience had shown to be necessary.

This ‘petition’ at once brought an official to Kotgarh for face-to-face talks, and it was agreed that *begar* for the postal service should be suspended immediately. This decision was very welcome, for the postal *begar* could be a dangerous task especially during the winter months ahead. But the officials were not prepared to meet the other demands of the people; the ‘strike notice’ came into operation, and the Kotgarh peasants awaited developments. Meanwhile they chose Stokes to represent them at the regular annual session of the National Congress which was to take place in Nagpur at the end of December.

The chief business before the Congress was to decide whether or not Gandhi’s non-cooperation programme should be continued. Stokes had been one of those who believed in cooperation with the new Provisional Councils; it was part of his Quaker tradition, as he saw it, to cooperate with anything inherently good. Earlier in the year, before the special session at Calcutta, he had met Gandhi and ‘argued with him by the hour’ about it, Stokes had maintained that the first task was to build up the people’s *capacity* for self-government. Let the Congress take up local grievances (such as *begar*) which the people understood, and show them how to act effectively for redress. Let local *panchayats* be encouraged to execute real justice in local disputes, and so by-pass the Law Courts. Congressmen in the Legislative Councils, Stokes argued, could give valuable support to such programmes. But he argued in vain. ‘I can no more convince him [Gandhi],’ he confessed, ‘than he does me.’

By December when the Nagpur Congress met, the boycott had such a record of success that many of those who had previously opposed Gandhi were now prepared to support him, and the non-cooperation movement was confirmed and continued. Stokes also supported him, but for quite different reasons, which he explained in an article in the press.<sup>2A</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi [he wrote] is the greatest moral and political asset of our national life. He is working not to impose *swaraj* from without, but to call it into being from within. In obeying him, though disarmed and defenceless [the people of India] have a nobler weapon than any invented for human undoing by the hand of man. His is the old call to victory by self-renunciation.

Gandhi was ‘the renouncer’, the renouncer with the vein of steel; that was part of his attraction for Stokes. He was one who would conquer, as Stokes had urged the Kotgarh villagers to do, ‘by enduring, not by force’. And along with this Stokes was attracted by the global human significance of Gandhi’s leadership: ‘He attacks the strongholds of selfishness and sin in the national and international life of our race.’

So in 1921 the non-cooperation movement went on, but in many places with a changed emphasis, and other Friends besides Stokes recognised its power for good. Even in the political ‘back-water’ of Hoshangabad Perry Pryce described with appreciation Gandhi’s attack on such ‘strongholds of sin’ as untouchability and drink. Siva Ram Herring and Kampta Prasad, working for temperance in the local villages, made friends with Congress volunteers who were doing the same. Francis Kilbey noted the successful campaign to purge the great spring festival, *Holi*, of its drunken licentiousness and spoke of this ‘great spiritual movement which manifests the spirit of Christ’. There was a new hopefulness in the air, in spite of some outbreaks of violence in some places. In May, soon after the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, had reached India, he invited four men for personal talk – Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, C. F. Andrews, Samuel Stokes. They were men who represented the wider and deeper aspects of the national movement. *The Indian Social Reformer*, commenting on the Viceroy’s choice of advisers, welcomed them as people ‘who place the spiritual above the temporal, and whose highest hopes for India are not for herself but for the sake of humanity.’

After that however Stokes concentrated on what he felt was his own calling, the service of his local community. At the beginning of April 1921 when their ‘strike notice’ expired, the people of Kotgarh quietly and unitedly acted on their decision and refused *begar*. The officials could not move them, and within a week their terms were accepted and *begar* on the Kotgarh stage was ended. The news, of course, ran like wildfire across the hills, and the peasants of Bushahr, one of the Agency states, led by a man called Kapur Singh, drew up another petition. This time there was a harsh response; Kapur Singh and others were imprisoned, and the people appealed to Stokes. Publicity and public opinion had their effect; by August the prisoners were released and a full settlement followed; *begar* was ended throughout the region. The battle had been won by wholly peaceful means.

There were other Friends in Nagpur during the stormy year 1920, although Stokes did not know of their presence. Before the end of 1919 Jack Hoyland had arrived there, and begun to work with another Friend, Harold Peterson from USA, in the YMCA. Jack took charge of the student hostel, and in July 1920 after the summer vacation he also became manager

of the Collegiate High School attached to the Hislop College. The College had been founded by Scottish missionaries of whom there were a number in the city. They made him welcome, their company was mentally stimulating, and he was once more doing the work he loved among boys and young men. Nevertheless it was a searing experience to return to India alone, without Helen and their little boys, and during the first months the stress brought on physical ill-health.

When the summer vacation came, the wise understanding Alfred Taylor took Jack off on a trip among the mountain ranges beyond Kotgarh. Together they tramped the Tibet road, along the snow-line, and Alfred introduced Jack to the scenes and people which he himself had discovered and enjoyed a few years earlier.<sup>3</sup> For Jack, the holiday was the beginning of healing, and back in Nagpur the healing continued. He got to know Jessie Marais, who had joined the mission in Nagpur about the same time as he did, and by November they were engaged to be married. During that Christmas vacation, while the Congress assembled in Nagpur, Jack took her to meet his old friends in Hoshangabad; in March 1921 the wedding took place (with what he felt to be Helen's blessing) under the great banyan tree at Makoriya. From then on he enjoyed in Jessie's company a serene and happy home; he was no longer alone as he had been during that first tumultuous year.

Tumultuous it was; if Hoshangabad was politically a backwater, Nagpur was a volcano. A hundred years earlier it had been the capital of a great Maratha state; long before Gandhi launched the Congress non-cooperation movement its students were seething with anger at the humiliations in the Punjab, and pride in the Maratha past turned into burning hatred of all things foreign, including the 'foreign' religion of the missionaries. They tore up their Bibles; when Jack began work at the Collegiate High School in July they hissed him in open assembly; one passionate youth seriously attempted to murder him.

During 1920 therefore Jack was involved in what he called 'a continual process of reconciliation'. For him the schoolboys of Nagpur were as much 'younger brothers' as those of Hoshangabad had been, and he at once set to work to study and use their own Marathi language. He gave himself unstintedly in friendship, entered into their feelings, slowly got their confidence. When the student who had tried to murder him developed tuberculosis Jack found him a place in a sanatorium, paid for the treatment and won his lasting devotion. The young men who had torn up their Bibles eagerly attended his scripture classes, and Jack in his turn shared with them his new-found enthusiasm for the great Maratha poet-saints.<sup>4</sup>

By October 1920, when the Congress non-cooperation movement was in full swing, Jack could say that in his own school 'all was well', and that

in contrast with the 'chaos' which prevailed in some other places life in Nagpur was 'sweet and pleasant'. There as elsewhere the Congress had organised independent 'national schools' for those who boycotted the Government institutions. Jack recognised their quality, for they offered the all-round character training in which he himself so strongly believed and which Government schools so often failed to give. Because of this he felt the 'chaos' at Aligarh to be especially tragic. The new Muslim University with its noble ideals, the fruit of so many years of vision and devotion,<sup>5</sup> was disrupted by 'nationalists' who captured one wing of the building, and whose leaders (as was shown later) deliberately instigated serious rioting.

As 1921 wore on there were other outbreaks of rioting and violence which Gandhi was unable to prevent or control. Early in 1922 he therefore called off the whole movement, an action which displeased many Congressmen. He himself was arrested, tried for sedition and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. His integrity, and the courtesy of the British judge, gave the trial a unique dignity, and partly at least because of the moral authority he exercised the people accepted the sentence peacefully. Government officials who had 'expected no end of trouble' were pleasantly surprised; Jack Hoyland, who had earlier considered that Gandhi's talk of non-violence was 'fatuous', changed his mind!

The end of the non-cooperation movement meant the end also of most of the 'national schools'; the Hislop College, which for a time had been almost emptied, filled up again. For the next five years Jack devoted himself to a 'free and fearless' education for his students there as fully as he had done in Hoshangabad. Trained historian as he was, he took classes in history; he also wrote a text-book on the subject, hoping to promote a more human and humane approach. This turned out, as he drily remarked, to be a compromise between his own ideas of how history *should* be taught and his publisher's ideas of what would sell! He played games with his students, as in Hoshangabad. Remembering what a contribution the hostel there had made to the life of the Kharraghat school, he urged Friends to build a student hostel for the Hislop College in Nagpur, and did much to raise the money and bring the hostel into being. Again and again he led parties of volunteers to the aid of villages devastated by plague or cholera, as he had done during the influenza epidemic of 1918. For college assemblies and hostel devotions he wrote *Prayers for use in an Indian College*, a book which was treasured and used far beyond the confines of the college for which it was written.

The year 1923 brought further opportunities for the kind of service Jack could give. Nagpur was the headquarters of the National Christian Council, which in that year decided to publish its own journal, *The Harvest*:

Field, and invited Jack to become one of the editors. He accepted, on the understanding that it should promote 'non-party constructive political discussion', advocate *Indian* leadership in the church, welcome original religious thought (even the 'heretical') and emphasise spiritual regeneration – the new birth – as the core of the faith. Talk of church union was already in the air, and Jack, whose thinking and friendships had always over-leaped sectarian boundaries, began reflecting on what Friends in India might contribute to 'the united church of the future'. Their function, he wrote, was not to be a sect, but 'a vitalising force without a label', which might help the church to find unity not in doctrine but in experience, the experience of 'new birth' and of a 'living Christ'. That spiritual presence guides his people *now*, and will guide them to decide whether or not to be baptised or renounce their caste allegiance.

During the same years Samuel Stokes in Kotgarh was working and thinking on parallel lines. He too sought the right kind of education for his growing children and the village children who were their playmates. He started a school for all of them together, and from 1925 onwards he had valuable help from a fellow-American named Richard B. Gregg. Gregg settled in Kotgarh for about three years, and worked out methods for teaching science, mathematics and so on, which were geared to the needs and interests of the local people. Stokes also, like Jack, wrestled with questions of Christian unity. He wrote for an independent Madras paper, *The Christian Patriot*; Indians, he said, must not be content simply to adopt western patterns of church life. They must find their own way, and work out for themselves the right relationship between loyalty to the universal Christ and loyalty to their own local community.

Jack had been stirred by the Maratha saints and especially by George Fox's contemporary Tuka Ram. Stokes also found in the treasures of Indian devotion confirmation and challenge for his own faith. He called himself (like the very earliest disciples) a 'follower of the Way', and his attitude to the scriptures, *all* scriptures, was essentially a Quaker one. 'Their 'authority', he said, lies in their power to speak a living word to the individual soul. Stokes' words echo that book he had so long treasured, *The Imitation of Christ*, but in speaking of the sense of ultimate mystery he turns to ancient India, to one of the great hymns of the *Rig Veda*.<sup>6</sup>

Stokes like Jack found deep contentment in his home. During the non-cooperation movement in 1921 he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and like many others used his enforced leisure to reflect and write. He wrote for his wife, to share with her the thoughts which had developed from the insights that had led him 10 years earlier to take her as his bride. The paper was not meant for publication, and became known only later when Andrews persuaded Stokes to let it be printed. Human

personal selves, he wrote, are the fruit of the 'timeless inherent need' of a God of love for loving personal experience; the 'profound truth [that] lies at the back of the teaching of the Cross' is that 'he who loves is surely crucified in the pain and sorrow and bewilderment of those he loves.'<sup>7</sup>

The Hoylands' home in Nagpur was a place of hospitality for old friends and new. It was a special delight to have a visit from Geoffrey Maw in 1924, when they listened with deep interest to Geoffrey's account of his experiences the previous year on the road to Badrinath. They arranged for him to speak on the subject at a public meeting; he attracted an even bigger crowd than the political speakers, and during the following years he too became a familiar figure in Nagpur and gave valuable service there. Meanwhile the life of the Hoyland home was enriched by the birth of Jessie's children, a son, and then amid special rejoicing, a *daughter*!

Apart from that, there were aspects of the Indian scene which gave Jack great uneasiness. After Gandhi's imprisonment the mutual goodwill between Hindu and Muslim which had prevailed during the non-cooperation movement was eroded by ugly 'communal' rioting, of which Nagpur had its share. When Gandhi was released on health grounds early in 1924 he at once sought the help of his Muslim friend Mahammad Ali in restoring confidence. His scrupulous sense of honour forbade him to enter the political field until the six years of his original sentence had expired. He devoted himself to what he called his 'constructive programme', to the kind of 'building from below' which Stokes had urged in 1920, and one plank of it was the 'Hindu-Muslim unity' for which Gokhale had pleaded.

Another friend, the great Muslim Abdul Ghaffar Khan, saw that this unity must rest on something deeper than mere political convenience; there must be a willingness on both sides to study and *understand* the other's religion and culture. Jack Hoyland responded eagerly; he and Harold Peterson, the American Friend, talked over ways in which Friends might help to build 'bridges of understanding'. 'What about getting Thomas Kelly<sup>8</sup> to India?' asked Peterson. 'He longs to see devotees of all religions united in a joint search for truth.' Jack welcomed the idea, for he realised that in this sensitive field he himself, as an Englishman, would inevitably be suspect; an American might have a better chance. But in the end Kelly did not come; the 'bridge of understanding' was unbuilt.

The Hindu-Muslim tensions affected remote Kotgarh little if at all, but Stokes fully shared Jack Hoyland's uneasiness at another aspect of the scene: the danger that 'nationalism' could become mere national selfishness. For Stokes, national selfishness was as bad as any other kind of selfishness. 'Nationalism' had become an almost unquestioned ideal, and not many Indian nationalists were as clear as Gandhi was that service of the



motherland was a part of service to humanity, and that 'if need be the nation must die in order that the human race may live'. Young Indian Christians, rightly in rebellion against the isolation of their community from the mainstream of Indian life, were as slow to accept the limitations of nationalism as were others. In 1924 Jack told a Christian student conference in Madras that deeply as Jesus cared for his own people he was *not* a 'nationalist'; the idea was not well received! Jack however was coming to believe that 'modern democratic nationalism is the arch-enemy of God on earth',<sup>9</sup> and with this in his mind he read Rabindranath Tagore's essay *Nationalism*.

Tagore argued, not for 'democracy', but that the cold foreign bureaucratic 'government by machine' should be replaced by the Indian tradition of personal human relationships between rulers and ruled. So far so good, thought Jack, but how to ensure that the rulers fulfilled their moral obligations? The Indian States, as far as he knew, ranged over the whole spectrum, from those far better ruled than 'British India' to those oppressed by petty and grievous tyranny. He had himself seen how such tyranny might be exercised by local bullies over helpless outcaste villagers – he had seen it done with impunity only a few miles from Nagpur. What if Indian personal rule were to meet oppression of that kind? The articles which Jack continued to write for *The Indian Social Reformer* show him 'thinking aloud' about the whole question.

The third source of uneasiness for Jack was that during the later 1920's some 'national' leaders were advocating that India should use methods very different from Gandhi's in the struggle for freedom. They were angered by those who said that because India could not 'defend herself' she was unfit to govern herself. It was widely believed that Gandhi, politically inactive as he then was, was politically finished, that the non-violent method of victory through endurance which had appealed so strongly to Stokes had failed. In Nagpur itself, as Jack knew, one national leader was telling Indian youth 'to learn to *kill*, scientifically'. The evil of political assassination, against which Gokhale had fought since the mid-90's, raised its head again, and was used not only against the British rulers but in the service of Hindu-Muslim rivalry also. Andrews' old friend Mahatma Munshi Ram (now Swami Shraddhananda), of whom Jack cherished such a vivid memory, was murdered by a Muslim in Delhi.

The YMCA's triennial conference was meeting in Bombay, and Jack was present. The conference laid aside all other business and sought earnestly for guidance about how its members might best serve India in this crisis. They found one guide in the philosopher Dr S. Radhakrishnan, who spoke in the spirit of Gandhi. 'You Christians,' he said, 'are called to a life of reconciliation, *forgetting patriotism in the service of humanity*.'

Once more, for Jack, came the call to build 'bridges of understanding'. Radhakrishnan's message was completed by Manilal Parikh, a Christian who combined his loyalty to Christ with loyalty to the community of his birth, and lived with his Jain kinsfolk in their family home. 'Our reconciliation,' he said, 'can only be offered in humility, recognising that we share the guilt.' The anger against the Arya Samaj which had led to the murder had been provoked by its adoption of the aggressive methods of propaganda practised by some Christians.

Through those five years in Nagpur, therefore, the burdens on Jack's shoulders had become steadily heavier. It was only possible to carry them at all because his happy home life was combined with a very disciplined routine in his own use of time. Then in 1927 came an overwhelming personal grief, the death of his father John William Hoyland. Ever since, as a child of five, Jack had lost his mother, his father had been his most trusted friend; all through his 15 years in India they had shared everything by letter. The realisation that this comradeship was irrevocably ended brought complete nervous exhaustion. Finding himself incapable of any mental exertion whatever, he spent months doing simple physical tasks in his beloved Makoriya. Early in 1928 he and Jessie returned to Britain with their young children.

The nervous exhaustion passed off, but medical checks in Britain revealed other problems. In 1924 Jack had had a bout of dengue fever, a disease of the coastal plains which he probably contracted on a visit to one of the coastal cities. That, along with the enteric fever which he had suffered in 1917, had caused permanent physical damage. The doctors' verdict was that he should not return to India, and he accepted it. His service for India was not however ended, though from then on it was given indirectly. Nor was Stokes' service ended; but he too never again played the part in public affairs which he had done in the 1920's.

## Notes to Chapter XV

1 Stokes gives as the source of these particulars the *Journal* of John Humphrey of Merion, 1680.

2 *Young India*, 13th October 1920.

2a Presumably one of the articles referred to in the Foreword to *The Failure of European Civilisation as a World Culture*, Madras 1921, p.1: 'During December last I contributed a series of articles to the *Servant* and the *Bombay Chronicle*.'

- 3 *The Failure of European Civilisation* (see previous note), pp.ix-x.
- 4 Article, 'Our Duty', in the *Bombay Chronicle*, 1921.
- 5 *World Outlook*, Geneva 1926. [Not found.]
- 6 *Young India*. [Date not found.]
- 7 *Satyakama*, Madras 1931, p.345.
- 8 The author of the much-valued *Testament of Devotion*.
- 9 Letter in the archives of the American Friends Service Committee.

## CHAPTER XVI

## ‘Embassies of the City of God’ : 1919 to 1927

*Make a new beginning  
And mingle again the kindred of the nations  
in the alchemy of Love,  
And with some finer essence of forbearance and forgiveness  
Temper our minds.*

ARISTOPHANES, *PEACE*

QUOTED BY H. T. HODGKIN IN *LAY RELIGION*

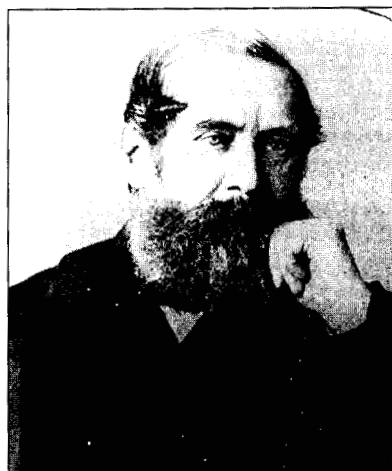
DURING THE YEARS which followed the First World War, and largely because of the new thinking induced by the war, there emerged a new pattern of Quaker activity in India. From the turn of the century there had been influences working for change; Jack Hoyland's work at Hoshangabad had been shaped by such influences, but from 1919 onwards the change was visible and recognised.

The pioneer was Carl Heath. A contemporary of Andrews and of Gandhi, he had spent his boyhood among radical thinkers in Paris. Then, after a period as a young teacher in the London slums he had begun to work like Martin Wood, for arbitration and peace in Europe. After the Peace Congress of 1908 he joined Joseph Gundry Alexander in the National Peace Council in Britain. But in 1914 the flood of 'patriotic' passion swept the Peace Council away, for its appeal to reason and commonsense was not enough, and to stand for peace in those days needed 'a conviction of the soul'. Carl Heath possessed this conviction, as did the Friends; in 1916, at the age of 47, he himself became a Friend.

Heath shared Westcott's faith in a 'spiritual illumination' available to the whole human family, and he at once called on Friends to prepare to set up 'embassies of the city of God in every great city of man'. Their



*Frank Squire.*



*Frederic Gravely.*

ambassadors, he said, should spearhead 'a new missionary movement' for peace and goodwill among men, and stand for the reality of the universal divine indwelling, then for study, and thirdly for service. Heath laid these proposals before London Yearly Meeting in 1917, with the strong support of Henry Hodgkin the secretary of the FFMA. Joseph and Katherine Taylor, who had retired in 1915 after 25 years in the Hoshangabad area, spoke of their own long-standing concern for Calcutta; it was agreed that Calcutta should be the first 'great city of man' to receive a Quaker embassy, and as soon as the armistice of November 1918 made travel possible the Taylors sailed, arriving early in 1919. They found other Friends already there who were ready to share their concern for a centre of peace and goodwill, Friends who were trying 'to spread the Truth through their ordinary daily business'.<sup>1</sup>

The first to arrive had been Frederic Gravely. A Quaker home and education had given him an interest in natural history, and after taking his degree in 1909 he had obtained a post in the Indian Museum in Calcutta, where he worked for his doctorate in biology. There was no one to tell him of the 'Hindu Quakers', but he ignored the gulf which separated British and Indian society, and found a congenial field of service among some of the needy and despised. The 'Old Mission Church' in Bow Bazaar had a Boys' Home for the destitute of any race – Indian, Chinese, Eurasian, and there Gravely spent his free time, making friends with them and introducing them to the fun of scouting.

Calcutta was the headquarters of the Indian YMCA, which had been founded from America and was still largely American-led. One of its special concerns, as in Nagpur, was the welfare of students; it was in fact doing work which was later taken over by the Student Christian Movement. During the war however the needs of young men in the army claimed prior attention, and the Calcutta staff was depleted. In 1917 an Irish Friend named Frank Squire, a business man in his early 40's, arrived to help them. He and Gravely, along with F. B. Hadow, the padre of the Old Mission Church, began to hold a Friends Meeting for Worship in the church every Saturday evening, followed by the Compline prayers. Not long afterwards Nalin Ganguly came back from Hoshangabad to his Calcutta home and also began working for the YMCA.

The Taylors therefore got a warm welcome. They spent their first six weeks with Frederic Gravely, while Nalin Ganguly and his Bengali friends set to work to find them a house – not in the 'European' part of the city but in the midst of its Indian population. They decided on 96 Beadon Street, in a modest Bengali neighbourhood near the University, and went to live there along with Frank Squire in March 1919. The house had previously been 'The Beadon Bar Hotel', and had had rather a shady reputation. They cleaned it up, and had soon 'turned hell into heaven', as a Bengali neighbour put it. They decided to call their new centre the 'Friends Settlement', and their Indian visitors quickly felt at ease there, as they had done in Elkanah Beard's first 'Quaker centre' in Benares nearly 50 years before.

One of Joseph Taylor's first acts was to seek out the 'Hindu Quakers'. Poornachandra was no longer there; he had died about 1912, and the younger, less-experienced members, who were very few in number, had been unable to maintain their Bengali Meeting for Worship without him. Nalin Ganguly the Bengali might perhaps have helped them, but he left for further study in England soon after the Settlement was opened. The new Meeting at Beadon Street used English; the Bengali group did not find this easy, so although they paid friendly visits and brought the Taylors their old records, they did not become involved.

In her own special work Katherine Taylor was able to overcome these language barriers. She was warm and outgoing, and quickly made friends among women of all communities, who worked together hard and methodically for the welfare of Calcutta's women and children. They revived the then moribund Vigilance Committee; they got a Children's Bill brought before the Provincial Council and passed into law; they opened a Home for children rescued from the brothels of the Chitpore Road. The value of Katherine's leadership was recognised; in spite of her

foreign blood and lack of Bengali she was invited to stand for election as representative of her ward on the Municipal Council.

Katherine courteously declined the invitation, but it was remarkable that it should have been given at all during those years. They were the years of 'non-cooperation'; the Amritsar tragedy had taken place barely a month after the Settlement was opened, and Calcutta was a place of constant political unrest. This however was not immediately apparent, and did not prevent much quiet work at the Settlement. As time passed other Friends came to Calcutta in the course of 'their ordinary daily business', and greatly valued the Meeting for Worship as the power-house for their work. Among them were former members of the war-time Friends' Ambulance Unit, Jack Clarke in the YMCA, Stanley Virgo in a bank. There were British and American Friends in business and in the professions. There were others, not Friends, who valued the Quaker fellowship for special reasons. The vindictive hatred of Germany which marred the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 also poisoned the life of 'English' churches in Calcutta, and drove sensitive spirits away. One of these, a young Baptist named Horace Collins, was to become a tower of strength to lonely pacifists in India 20 years later.

There were also Indian attenders. Many of them were students, attracted by Joseph Taylor's lively open mind and Frank Squire's interest in their welfare. The 'study' programme of the Centre included Sunday evening lecture-forums, which were popular with thoughtful people of all ages; there were also more intimate groups which read and discussed the Gospels. Interest was keen, for Mahatma Gandhi's reverence for Jesus was by then widely known, and Hindus and Muslims alike were asking their Christian friends to help them to learn about him.

For Gandhi, Jesus was the supreme example of a life wholly regulated by 'the eternal law of Love'. For the students who came to study and worship at the Friends Settlement, Gandhi himself embodied 'the way of love taught by Jesus, the way to freedom'. But for these young men 'Christ' was one thing and 'Christian' another. A Christian was still, for them, a foreigner. One of Frank Squire's students was so openly committed to Christ that Frank asked him why he did not 'become a Christian'.

Everyone knows [he replied], that I love Christ and try to live like Jesus. But I must remain a Hindu. I do not wish to have hatred in my heart as the English do against the Germans.

No wonder that Joseph Taylor, as he watched these earnest youngsters, felt increasingly that he wished neither to be 'bottled and labelled and put on a shelf', nor to apply labels to other people. Younger Friends in India were with him; Jack Hoyland in Nagpur had also felt the challenge to Friends to become 'a vitalising force without the label'. Even

before Joseph Taylor left England for India at the end of 1918 he had urged his fellow-Friends<sup>3</sup> to practise, along with their accepted standards of moral integrity, a new poverty and simplicity, and the presence of a 'living Christ' who can and does guide his people now. These too were things which had become real to Joseph's younger contemporaries, Stokes and Maw and Khushilal. The task was not to insist on labels, but 'to lead men to Christ and leave them there'.

The Friends Settlement therefore began to print short papers through which these things might be shared more widely. By the end of 1921 there were three. *The World's Greatest Guru* was about Jesus; *A Great Spiritual Teacher* described the work and message of George Fox; *A Friend of Man and Beast* was about that prophet of simplicity John Woolman.<sup>4</sup> The papers were printed anonymously, but the first is known to have been written by an Indian Friend, G. L. Narasimhan of Bombay, and that it so 'spoke to the condition' of India in 1921 that it was re-printed in full in a widely-read periodical, *The Christian Patriot* of Madras.

G. L. Narasimhan came originally from Vizianagram in south India, but had settled in Bombay. There he became a friend of the Karmarkar family who owned *The Guardian's* press, and Joseph Taylor had met him in earlier years when he visited Bombay on *Guardian* business. They became friends, and Narasimhan visited the Taylors in Hoshangabad district and became interested in Quakers. In 1916 he attended their Golden Jubilee meetings and was much impressed by Sadhu Sunder Singh; soon after, he was accepted into membership. Previously he had been a member of the Brahmo Samaj, and his wife was the daughter of one of its Calcutta leaders, so that he was a regular visitor to the city and his friendship with the Taylors was renewed.

Narasimhan's paper, *The World's Greatest Guru*, was written for an Indian readership at a particular time, but had a wider relevance, for like Henry T. Hodgkin he regarded Jesus as 'the most revolutionary and daring spirit the world has ever known'.<sup>5</sup> At a time when 'all eyes are turned on Mahatma Gandhi', Narasimhan's purpose is 'to lay bare the secret of his wonderful power and authority'. That secret, he says, is to be found in the 'eternal law of Love' which Gandhi had learned from Jesus, and which when perfected 'casts out fear'. 'Fearlessness,' Gandhi declared, 'is the first requisite of spirituality'; he believed that India had lost her external freedom because she had lost her 'moral stamina'. Therefore, said Narasimhan, the guru who can teach modern India the *Vidya* (knowledge) of fearless love is the greatest of all gurus. Jesus taught that secret by the cross; the meaning of the cross is an 'internal *swaraj*' by which selfishness is crucified, and without which external *swaraj* cannot be had.

Narasimhan goes on to speak of the obstacles which keep India from Christ: he is the foreigners' god; his church is split up into institutions defaced by the quarrels of the sects; the so-called Christian nations, greedy for wealth, make war on one another. Let India reject these things, but let her recognise also that 'the moral and spiritual grandeur of Christ belongs to *all* . . . Christ is the Seed of the spirit of Love, buried in each one of *us*.' If we follow this Guru's teaching 'we shall not overcome the west with firearms but with that true spirituality which at one time made India the preceptor of the world.'

The Settlement itself did its best to overcome the three obstacles of which Narasimhan had written. The first and most difficult was its 'foreignness'. The Meeting for Worship grew no local roots. It was valued and attended chiefly by foreigners and students, but the latter were naturally a continually changing group, not permanent residents. There was friendly social intercourse with Bengali neighbours, at ease in the simplicity of the Friends' way of life, but they were not attracted to the Meeting, which therefore did not survive when the foreign Friends withdrew.

The Settlement did make some contribution to lessening the evils of sectarianism. Frederic Gravely and Frank Squire had already made a beginning when they joined F. B. Hadow to help the Old Mission Church, and shared both forms of worship. At the end of 1919 Gravely had been transferred to Madras, but Squire and Taylor had continued the friendly contact with Hadow and the boys. The established churches nevertheless regarded the Taylors' coming with suspicion, but this soon changed. 'When you first came you were not wanted,' said a senior Indian Christian to Joseph Taylor. 'But you have been a blessing. This house is a centre of unity and fellowship for us all.' Joseph's own attitude opened the way. 'The church is an *organism*, a living body,' he wrote, 'which means that it has distinctions within a unity. Both the unity and the distinctions are essential.' The Oxford Mission, which gave a high place to sacramental ritual, showed generous appreciation of the Settlement's work, whereas, as Joseph was aware, some Friends in England regarded 'ritualists' with hostility. 'We have very good relations with *our friend the enemy*,' he once wrote to London, 'but better not say so in a report!' (Forty years later a young London Friend, Fred Pinn, worked with the Oxford Mission to create a school where boys from the poorest homes learned 'to handle tools with skill, tackle jobs with confidence, and use their brains on their *real* problems.' It was practical education for the poorest of the poor such as Jack Hoyland had longed to see provided for the needy villages of the Hoshangabad District.)

The third obstacle, the violence and hatred which Narasimhan had seen in the 'Christian' nations of the west, was encountered in the Settlement in a different form. Bengal never wholeheartedly accepted Gandhi's leadership, and national feeling in Calcutta sometimes exploded into acts of indiscriminate anti-British violence. Beadon Square was a sort of local Hyde Park Corner; within a few yards of the Settlement speakers poured out such racial hatred that the Taylors' Bengali neighbours invited them to take refuge in their homes if need should arise. Fortunately it never did.

It seemed to Joseph Taylor that one good way to make the Settlement a centre of peace and goodwill would be to revive the Bombay *Guardian*, and to carry on in its pages the same fair and honest scrutiny of public affairs which had marked it in the days before the war. Letters came to him from former readers, telling him how much they had valued its 'undeviating standard of right and wrong' and its 'combination of breadth and spirituality'.<sup>6</sup> Jack Hoyland too was enthusiastic that this should be done, and Joseph hoped to make it a priority and get the *Guardian* going by the beginning of 1920 as 'a link in the chain of Quaker periodicals'. In Calcutta the way was open, for a former organ of Christian opinion, *The Friend of India*, had ceased publication.

The Trustees in London however preferred that Friends should cooperate with others in the venture. Joseph understood why; the Bombay *Guardian* had had to close because Friends could not provide continuity of Quaker editorship. There followed months and years of time-consuming and fruitless negotiation with the YMCA, which Joseph found very frustrating. Finally an independent Indian committee was formed, and the *Guardian* published its first Calcutta number in January 1923. There was therefore no mouthpiece of concerned and impartial Quaker commentary on the momentous national events of the intervening years.

Joseph Taylor and his committee found an able and sensitive Associate Editor in A. N. Sudarisanam. He was one of that growing number of thoughtful Indian Christians who deplored the isolation of their community from the mainstream of national life. Some of the pioneers, men of Francis Kilbey's generation or a little younger, had in 1905 formed a 'National Missionary Society', to by-pass the sectarianism of the foreign missions and witness for Christ in their own country in their own way. From that initiative grew others; like-minded thinkers established *The Christian Patriot*, and the first Christian *ashrams* came into being seeking to express discipleship of Christ in Indian spiritual terms. A sympathetic foreigner, J. N. Farquhar, left his original mission to become literary secretary of the YMCA, and work alongside an Indian, K. T. Paul, to build up a cadre of Indian writers for YMCA publications. Sudarisanam, himself

a South Indian, had worked closely with K. T. Paul, a Christian who had spoken at meetings in London, organised during the Yearly Meeting in the summer of 1919, of India's need to judge for itself how much it could rightly and wisely accept from the west – even from western Friends!

For the first issue of the Calcutta *Guardian* Joseph Taylor and Sudarisanam drew up a statement of editorial policy.

This paper is national [they wrote]. It believes that the government of the country should be carried on with the willing consent of those governed. . . . It stands for freedom – national, religious, social – which it believes to be a profoundly Christian thing.

The paper was welcomed; Hoyland and Kilbey did what they could in writing for it; G. L. Narasimhan raised in its columns a question of great interest to the cause of goodwill in India: 'Can the Hebrew-Christian and Hindu-Buddhist streams of religious thought unite?' It was a good start, but Joseph Taylor could not share in its development for much more than a year. By 1924 he had become almost completely deaf, and he and Katherine decided to withdraw. The Settlement was closed; as Joseph had foreseen, there was no concerned Friend available to provide continuity.

The *Guardian* however did not close down, though it passed through some very difficult times. Sudarisanam carried it on with courage and determination, with the help of the Indian committee and especially of Dr H. C. Zacharias, a Christian member of the Servants of India Society. The paper maintained its scrupulous honesty and fairness, but after *The Christian Patriot* ceased publication Sudarisanam moved it to Madras, where its integrity and independence continued to win respect, and where Friends in India, as well as the Trustees in Britain, gave a good deal of personal support.

Joseph Taylor himself died early in 1927, when the *Guardian* was still in Calcutta, and it printed the tributes of his many friends there. He was so young in mind, they said, so 'actively interested in everything'. Like his brother Alfred, who loved exploring, he too had a cherished hobby. Joseph's was water-colour painting, which he taught to little boys in Calcutta schools to his and their great enjoyment. When his deafness excluded him from conversation he would gracefully set his hostess at ease by retiring to a corner with his sketch-book. The spiritual maturity expressed in such personal caring had attracted old and young alike. He and Katherine were 'real Christians . . . if only there were more like them!' Ten years after they left Calcutta they were remembered with loving respect by Friends in Madras, a city they had never visited.

For 'there were more like them'. All through the Taylors' years in Calcutta other Friends had been coming to India to 'live the Truth' in a

great variety of personal service, and in 1921 for the first time the FFMA made mention of such Friends in its annual report. Two of them had been in India from before the war, Arthur Davies in the Law College in Madras and Percy Oddie Whitlock in the Indian Educational Service in Orissa. Little is known of Arthur Davies' public service except that it won him the Kaiser-i-Hind medal. Percy Oddie Whitlock however was Jack Hoyland's contemporary and in many ways his counterpart.

Whitlock, like Hoyland, had graduated from Cambridge in 1910. He had spent the next three years teaching in Quaker schools, Kendal and Bootham. At Cambridge C. F. Andrews had turned his thoughts towards India, and in 1914 he was appointed Professor of English in the Government Ravenshaw College at Cuttack, then the capital of Orissa. He brought with him a brilliant academic and athletic record, and he was soon playing cricket alongside his students in the College teams. His quiet competence and genial human friendliness shows up in an incident related by a student of a later generation who knew him as Principal. After one vacation the students had returned to a new hostel building, and happily prepared for entry by swilling the floors, Indian style, with several buckets of water. They discovered too late that no drainage outlet had been provided. Laboriously they mopped up the floor, and then complained to the contractor, who reported them to Whitlock for 'impertinence'. Whitlock listened quietly to their story, dismissed them and said no more. A few days later he called the boys to his room and introduced them to the English Chief Engineer.

I'm told [said the engineer with a smile] that you want to know why there are no water outlets in your rooms. The truth is that the engineering books were all written in England, and in England they don't wash floors that way.

'Why not get a book written for *India*?' asked Whitlock drily.

The students of course were politically alive, and during the non-cooperation movement of 1920 they boycotted their classes and picketed the college gates. Whitlock strolled along to talk with them. 'Is it true,' he asked, 'that Dr Rajendra Prasad is one of your leaders?' 'Yes sir,' they replied. 'In that case,' said Whitlock, 'your movement is to be respected. I know Dr Prasad; I know him to be a man of honour.'<sup>8</sup> Years later, when Whitlock was acting Principal, he rebuked another generation of students for walking out of their classes when the news of Lajpat Rai's death reached them. 'That was discourteous to your teachers,' he said. 'Why didn't you come to me? I would have suspended classes, and we could have held a proper memorial meeting.' But he bore them no grudge.

In class, Whitlock endeared himself by his frank man-to-man approach. He was never afraid to say 'I don't know, I'll think that over,



we'll come back to it tomorrow.' He was not afraid to say openly in class that if India had a leader of the stature of Garibaldi she would soon be free. An unusual style for a Government College in the 1920's! Whitlock devoted himself to the Ravenshaw College for 15 years, and for five years more to the Government College in Patna. Shortly before he retired in 1935 he said of himself, what all his students knew to be true: 'It is possible to be a Government servant and fair-minded.'<sup>9</sup>

Another fair-minded Government servant was Frederic Gravely. When he reached Madras from Calcutta at the beginning of 1920 some Friends were already there, and they were soon joined by others. Besides Arthur Davies there were Edward Barnes, teaching in the Madras Christian College, and William and Lavinia Hindle in the YMCA. Guy Jackson, an engineer in Government service, with his wife Emily, lived sometimes in the city and sometimes in some other southern town. In 1921 Reginald Dann was appointed Director of Town Planning, and he and his wife Freda joined the group. A Meeting for Worship was soon established, and as in Calcutta attracted 'seekers' both Indian and foreign. In 1925 came Dorothy Hersey, to teach music and English in an independent Indian school.

All these Friends, in their several ways, 'witnessed to truth' in their daily work. Gravely contributed to the Government his scientific enthusiasm and his concern for human relationships. Previous Superintendents had run it as a one-man show; under Gravely's unobtrusive leadership its staff became a team working together on a common task: to help the people of the city to respect and enjoy their natural environment and their cultural traditions. Gravely and his team created a fine archaeological gallery, where treasures of stone and bronze sculpture are displayed 'in a way which the ordinary interested visitor can readily understand'.

To help people to enjoy their natural environment the Museum staff prepared a comprehensive record of *The Flowering Plants of Madras City*. Gravely, himself a biologist, found an enthusiastic helper in Edward (Ted) Barnes, who though a chemist by profession was a knowledgeable amateur botanist. Ted used his scientific and practical skills with a kindness for which nothing was too small. When Dorothy Hersey and her school children had tried unsuccessfully to save an injured kite, Ted helped her to stuff it so that she could use it for her drawing lessons. His greatest service to the Madras Christian College was not as Professor of Chemistry, competent and conscientious as that was; it was as creator of the beauty of the new campus to which the college moved from its cramped and noisy site in the centre of the city. During his years in Madras he had married, and he and his wife Alice became pioneer 'settlers' in the scrub jungle of the new location. It is to Ted that the college owes the hundreds of trees which line its shady roads; it was he who nurtured the seedlings, planted

and guarded them until they could stand alone. It was Ted also with accurate knowledge and many hours of patient labour turned patches of the original jungle into tangles of fragrant and lovely wilderness. (Of him it might truly be said: *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!*) The Friends Meeting for Worship was greatly enriched by his quiet presence, for he combined a scrupulous intellectual honesty, a reverent agnosticism about ultimate mysteries, with a shy friendliness whose warmth touched all alike.

Frederic Gravely continued to express his own friendliness in his scouting. In his first years in Madras he was still a bachelor, and the Superintendent's quarters at the museum became a regular scout camp, where Brahmin boys – the sons of his colleagues, and their friends – learned to water-proof their own ground-sheets and 'cook a tasty meal out of doors in a maximum of one hour'. Nor did he forget the poor and despised. His staff remembered how he once counted out before them the number of sticks in a box of matches; not one was to be wasted, he said, for they came from the taxes of the poor. That story would surely have pleased Gandhi! Gravely himself came to know and respect Gandhi's thought as he met the political prisoners in the Madras Penitentiary, where he was a regular visitor. Government servant though he was, he won their affectionate confidence, while at the same time he cared for and befriended the 'ordinary' criminals, so many of whom had never had a chance. In short he did directly and simply what he thought to be right. When in 1925 he met and married Laura Belling, she brought him into touch with another side of Gandhi's thought. Laura was a Dane, and had been helping one of her fellow-Danes in a school for Indian girls inspired by Gandhi.

When after more than 20 years of service Frederic Gravely retired from the museum, his colleague Dr T. N. Sadasivan put into words what his leadership there had meant to his whole staff: 'We have tried to emulate Dr Gravely in scientific ethics and in public relations. We know of no one we would rather resemble, as a man and as a scientist.'<sup>10</sup>

Reg and Freda Dann made another distinctive contribution, both professionally and personally. As Director of Town Planning Reg dreamed of helping to create a Madras Beautiful, preserving the loveliness of the city's natural setting and at the same time giving its citizens well-planned family homes and opportunities for education, recreation and public service. The dream was not realised, though it has never been entirely forgotten, for there were too few members of the City Council who shared it. Reg's official work therefore brought many frustrations, but he found other outlets for his creative gifts.

Dann the architect studied with admiration the traditions of South Indian domestic architecture, 'developed through centuries, with infinite patience and indomitable courage, to meet the challenge of climate and

available material'. He loved the quality of *life* in the traditional handmade brick and hand-worked stone. He himself was soon busy, outside his official duties, designing buildings which were 'the language of his soul'. Whether family homes, hospitals or universities, they embody his standards of integrity: they must be *useful* for their purpose, and strong, and built with simplicity and truthfulness. Any lower standard would have been, for him, an insult to the beauty of the world and the divine potential in humanity. One of these buildings is the chapel of the Women's Christian College in Madras, built in 1923, a place 'whose very bricks and mortar seem to have captured a spirit of worship'.<sup>11</sup>

This professional work was not Dann's only service to his adopted city. He gave personal service to a number of diverse but worthy causes – the YMCA, the Olympic Association, the City Sanitary League, the Victoria Technical Institute for Indian handicrafts. He gave a patient, listening ear to troubled colleagues, petty clerks, impetuous students, struggling craftsmen. Always he was upheld by Freda, and by the happiness of the home he shared with her. One caller, being informed by the servant at the door that his master and mistress were at table, said: 'Then don't disturb them; your master would be angry.' He never forgot the servant's response: 'My master is *never* angry!' That home was a haven of peace to many, and not least to the young Friend Dorothy Hersey, whose adventurous spirit and eagerness to understand the India to which she had come exposed her to things that sometimes hurt her. Freda and she shared a deep love of animals; Freda always had dog-companions.

In 1922, in the aftermath of the non-cooperation movement and of Mahatma Gandhi's trial and imprisonment, a thoughtful young Indian Christian named A. A. Paul, who was living in Madras, started an 'International Fellowship'. Paul had been inspired by Gandhi's principle that Indians, even when they rejected British rule, 'should regard English people as our friends'.<sup>12</sup> The Fellowship was open to anyone of either race who accepted this principle; it brought together Indians and foreigners, Government servants and non-cooperators, Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Christians. Meetings in the grounds of the YWCA began with 'multilingual volley-ball and intercommunal tennis' and went on after a 'cosmopolitan' cup of tea to frank but good-tempered discussion of current topics. 'Some say that it is unnecessary, others that it is impossible,' reported the founder-secretary, but the Madras Quakers, along with many others, thought it both necessary and possible, and gave it strong support. Guy and Emily Jackson were of special service; transferred as they often were from one town to another they helped to start new local fellowships wherever they went. The idea spread rapidly; within a few years there were International Fellowships in places as distant from one another as Lahore in the Punjab and Trivandrum by the southern ocean. In Lahore

one of the founders was another Friend, a young engineer named Theodore Burtt, whose interest in India had been stimulated by Nalin Ganguly when they were both students in Birmingham in 1919-21, and who now worked for the Government Irrigation Department.

Through the International Fellowship Friends developed new contacts with Bombay. G. L. Narasimhan was already there, and in 1922 he had been chosen as President of the Indian Christian Association, even though he had never been baptised! He accepted, hoping that he might help to heal sectarian differences as Friends in Calcutta were doing, and to 'liberalise thought on religious matters'. He himself was long remembered for his generous kindness and the radiance and peace of his spirit. He pleaded that a Quaker 'ambassador', preferably a woman, should be sent to Bombay. This did not happen, though a few years later women Friends such as Kathleen Whitby and Agnes Maclean were a welcome 'unofficial' presence there.

What did happen was that by 1927 plans were being made to link the local International Fellowships in an all-India Federation. This was done at the end of the year, at a meeting held at Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad in which Gandhi himself took part. The chairman of the new Federation was a Bombay man, Professor Pestonjee Ardeshir Wadia, who was the son of one of Martin Wood's fellow-workers and descended from an Indian friend of Charles Forbes. Professor Wadia himself was close to Friends in spirit, though he never formally joined the Society. His home in central Bombay was for many years the venue of a regular Friends Meeting for Worship, remembered with gratitude both by resident Friends and by those in transit through that 'gateway to India'.

Other Friends came to India in 1919 whose 'ordinary business' was of a less 'professional' kind. They came, like Rachel Metcalfe long before them, to work with their hands. One of them was Hugh Maclean, who had been born in India, but had grown up to be a farmer in Scotland and had joined Friends there. He had spent some of the war years in Birmingham where he trained Friends' Ambulance Unit members for agricultural work, and where in 1916-17 he met Geoffrey and Mildred Maw. He reached India along with two of his FAU associates, George McCabe and William Pitt. George went to work on Sir Daniel Hamilton's cooperative farm in Bengal; Hugh and William went first to visit Geoffrey Maw at Itarsi, and shared for a few days in the experience of spiritual revival there. Then they set out, with the support of the FFMA, to learn what they could of other agricultural enterprises. The Addisons were on leave, so there was little to learn in Makoriya; in 1919 the Punjab was closed to them; they did visit among other places Sam Higginbottom's Agricultural Institute at Allahabad, for their purpose was to help to nurture

an economically independent church which gave an honourable place to 'common toil', as George Swan had longed to do.

In the autumn of 1919, when they had made some progress in Hindi, they began to look for land in the Himalayan foothills in the neighbourhood of Dehra Dun, and found that no land was to be had at a fair price. So for the time being they gave up the idea of farming, rented an empty shed and started a leather business. 'Christians' proved such unsatisfactory workmen that they turned instead to the traditional shoe-makers, Muslims and low-caste *mochis*, and soon felt that they had done the right thing.

We work alongside our men from 8.30 to 5 [wrote Hugh], trying to live a Christian life at our daily work. The leather business has taught us not only the skills of the trade but much else that we needed to know of the Indian point of view. Our workers are becoming our friends; they are hard-working and teachable, though some are notorious drunkards! One thing comes home to me very forcibly: there are many who are born of God outside the Christian community.

Honest workmanship, fair prices, open straight dealing made the business popular with the poorer people of the town, both Indian and Eurasian. 'Several shopkeepers have come after dark and told us that we have been a blessing – we do not know how.' On Sundays they held a little Meeting for Worship, of which some missionaries were critical because there was no preaching, no pressure for 'conversion'.

We try to let our *lives* preach [they replied], but we are always ready to 'speak a word in season' . . . people like to hear a human voice, even though God *does* speak in the heart.

The little business was beginning to pay its way. Maclean and Pitt did not want it to expand, 'lest the spiritual should be drowned in the commercial', but during the hot weather of 1920 they opened a 'branch' workshop just up the hill at Masuri (Mussoorie), where Geoffrey Maw met them again and commented on their fine witness.

That was a happy year, but before the end of it 'non-cooperators' in Dehra Dun were causing difficulty, in spite of the Friends' sympathy with India's desire for a national life. Their thoughts turned once more to farming, and in the spring of 1921 Maclean went prospecting for land in the Kumaon hills. He was much attracted by the skilled independent farmers of the region, who welcomed him and offered him land at a fair price. Hopes ran high, but were shattered by an unexpected blow. In August Maclean contracted typhoid fever and became dangerously ill. George McCabe came from Bengal to help, and together he and William

Pitt nursed Hugh through the crisis, but his recovery was very slow. Reluctantly they were forced to admit that independent farming in Kumaon was no longer feasible.

Various alternatives offered; they chose Dr Graham's Homes for destitute orphans at Kalimpong in the eastern Himalayas, where Pitt took charge of the workshops and Maclean of the estate. He found special satisfaction in building the chapel – of local stone, hand-dressed and carved by simple workmen who had never carved stone before. It was a lovely place of worship, 'revealing through human hands the beauty of the mind of God,' as Hugh wrote. Did Reg Dann, at work on the college chapel in far-away Madras, ever hear of *this* simple Quaker creation?

So the little Quaker farm never came into being, but a few years later another Friend in India reflected creatively on the practice of agriculture. Joseph Hutchinson followed the great Sir Albert Howard at Indore,<sup>13</sup> and spent there what he said were 'the happiest and most fruitful years of his life' conducting research on the cotton plant along with Indian colleagues who became personal friends. 'To understand the evolution of the cottons,' he wrote, 'is to identify part of the pattern of life.' He went on to think about more complex patterns, and about the need for an education able to 'span the range of social, economic and practical wisdom which goes into the practice of agriculture'.<sup>14</sup> Hutchinson's thought was at a university level, but it has affinities with Gandhi's vision of a village education which should enable 'social, economic and practical wisdom' to be applied to the village farms of India.

By the end of 1924 after six years of courageous work in India, Maclean and Pitt were back in Britain (where Pitt married Maclean's sister Christine). In 1927 Maclean left the Society of Friends 'because the *essential* thing is Christ reproduced in the believer's life, something which transcends all sects'. So far, Joseph Taylor would have agreed; he too had refused to be 'bottled and labelled'. But Joseph regarded Friends as an 'association of believers within the church' whose job, among others, was to provide continuity where it was needed, for a school, a hospital, a newspaper. *His* criticism was that Friends in India did not do *that* job properly. He may have been right.

## Notes to Chapter XVI

- 1 *The Friend*, 22nd October 1920.
- 2 The name Beadon commemorates a popular Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who had declared that he would rather lose his right hand than be a party to any increase in the hated salt tax.
- 3 In an article in *Workers at Home and Abroad*, November 1918.
- 4 Copies of these pamphlets are in Friends House Library, London, annotated as having been received early February 1922.
- 5 Henry T. Hodgkin, *Lay Religion*, 1919.
- 6 The comments quoted are from J. Sinclair Stevenson, an Irish missionary much beloved for his humble saintly life.
- 7 E.C. Dewick, tribute in *The Guardian*, Calcutta, 17th March 1927.
- 8 Dr Rajendra Prasad (later to become the first President of independent India) was then a national leader in Bihar, which was administratively linked with Orissa. Ravenshaw College was therefore affiliated to the University of Patna, and it was there that Whitlock and Prasad had met.
- 9 *The Friend*, 24th June 1932. The author is indebted to Whitlock's former students Sri N. Kanungo of Cuttack and Sri A.N. Mukerji of Calcutta, for anecdotes included in this account.
- 10 *Centenary Souvenir*, Madras Government Museum. Much of the material about Madras Friends is derived from personal knowledge. The author was resident in Madras 1928-1939.
- 11 The description comes from Freda Dann.
- 12 Gandhi's letter to Mahommed Ali, 7th February 1924, quoted in R.M. Gray and M.C. Parikh, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Calcutta 1924, p.127.
- 13 Joseph Hutchinson was still in 1980 remembered in Indore. Sir Albert Howard's seminal book, *Agricultural Testament*, 1940, has in later years had great influence upon Friends and others in India.
- 14 Quotations are from *Reflections on a Research Career*, a lecture given in Cambridge after Hutchinson's retirement.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Cross Purposes : 1919 to 1935

HOW TO ENSURE CONTINUITY when continuity is needful? And when is it needful? The questions which had exercised Joseph Taylor in Calcutta were being raised, in one form or another, in the Friends' missions in Bundelkhand and Hoshangabad. They had failed, twice over, to maintain continuity in the life of the High School at Hoshangabad; the hospital at Itarsi, although it had had no doctor available during the influenza epidemic in 1918, had fared better. In Bundelkhand there was no mission High School, and at that time no hospital. Questions arose not over particular institutions, but over the central purpose of both the missions, the preaching of the Gospel through life and word. Geoffrey Maw and Jack Hoyland had raised these questions in relation to the calling of the *sadhu*; the message was given, it found a welcome, but it had no lasting impact because after the *sadhu* moved on it was not followed up. Geoffrey had seen the same weakness in the usual wide-ranging preaching tours undertaken by missionaries during the cool season, and had tried a new approach at Borda at the end of 1919, when he made an extended stay in one place.

Similar questions arose in Bundelkhand. Margaret Smith, like Delia Fistler before her, felt a great urge to carry the Gospel message to places where it had never been heard before. Some of the orphan boys, following Dalsaiya, had become devoted evangelists; mission reports record how many difficult miles they covered, and how many 'new' villages they reached. With them went Hiralal, who 20 years earlier, as a lame child of seven, had made his heroic jungle trek to Nowgong. Hiralal was still lame, so he rode a pony, carrying the party's supply of Gospels. One day, when they camped outside a 'new' village, Hiralal quietly disappeared. A little later he returned, bringing a young woman. The village was his own birth place, the woman his long-lost sister.

So the seed was broadcast more and more widely, but harvest did not follow. When Alison and Inez Rogers reached Nowgong in 1921 they asked questions: how could a harvest be expected when the seed sown had not

been watered, when there had been no nurture of those whose interest had been aroused? The Rogers spent at least one summer vacation with British Friends in Pachmarhi, and found that they were asking similar questions. Merrill and Anne Coffin, who arrived in Bundelkhand two years later, agreed that new methods ought to be tried. Together they discussed the matter with the Indian evangelists, one of whom, Motilal, listened eagerly. Three Bible students were in training with him, and he and they began to keep in touch with the individuals who responded to their message, and to 'water the seed'. The results seemed encouraging, but Esther Baird did not share their enthusiasm. She was by then in her mid-60s, and she could not easily accept changes in the established ways; most of the senior workers, who naturally revered her as a mother, followed her lead.

There were other areas of questioning and divergence of opinion. Joseph and Katharine Taylor's concern for healthy national life was shared by a number of Friends in the Hoshangabad area. During the years when Joseph Taylor was struggling to get *The Guardian* re-started, Francis Kilbey was sending to England a regular newsletter about public events with sympathetic but discriminating comments on the non-cooperation movement and Gandhi's strong moral leadership. Comments by Ratcliffe Addison and Henry Robson show that they too were following developments with interest. Others however, more aware of the continuing undercurrent of anti-British hostility, felt it their duty to 'uphold the cause of loyalty', and most Indian Friends did the same. They feared what might happen when they were no longer under the 'protection' of the British Raj.

Nor did the Indian Friends as a whole share the concern for international peace and goodwill which had brought the Calcutta Settlement into being. 'A full understanding of the distinctive views of Friends' had not been considered necessary for them, and the peace testimony which had been so central for British Friends during the war was beyond the range of their thought. In 1920 a young English Friend named Roderic Clark, who had served a prison sentence as a conscientious objector, paid a business visit to India and took the opportunity to visit Hoshangabad Friends also. His talk astonished them: 'In prison, and not ashamed to own it? Could it ever be right to disobey the Government?'

Esther Baird in Bundelkhand was of about the same age as Joseph Taylor, and had reached India, as Francis Kilbey did, in the years just preceding the great famines. But her attitude to 'non-cooperation' was very different from theirs. In her eyes Gandhi was merely 'a social and political agitator', a leader of sedition; the Christians of Bundelkhand should be protected from his influence at all costs. Her younger colleagues, both American and Indian, disagreed. Margaret Smith and Alison Rogers welcomed Gandhi's fight against 'the sin of untouchability', and his

declaration that India would never be truly free without justice for the outcaste and oppressed. Motilal was not prepared to condemn India's struggle for freedom; he believed like Joseph Taylor that liberty 'is a profoundly Christian thing'.

These divergences of outlook were complicated by the fact that in both British and American missions there was serious misunderstanding at the 'home base' of the real position in India. In America the misunderstanding arose from the way the mission was organised; it placed great authority in the hands of the 'Superintendent' in India, who was the only recognised channel of communication with the Board in Ohio.

During the Rogers' first years in India Esther Baird was on leave in America, and they lived in Nowgong studying the situation and the language. She returned along with the Coffin family in 1923, and the Rogers then moved to Harpalpur. They found much satisfaction in their work there; they helped the schools, supported William Parsad in his clinic, and made friends with the Christians, the townspeople and the well-disposed Rajah of Alipura. Esther however did not welcome their independence of outlook, and the reports of their work which reached the Board were at best lukewarm. At the end of their term of service however they met the Board in person, and made a different and very favourable impression.

There was an intrinsically healthy rule that foreign workers should not be sent back to India unless the Indian church invited them to return. The invitation however had to be sent through the Superintendent and although the Harpalpur church was eager to have the Rogers back, no invitation ever reached the Board. Nothing could be done, even though the Board was convinced of the value of their work.

This concentration of authority in the Superintendent raised problems for the medical service, something very dear to Esther herself. Before she left for furlough in 1921 she had got the future doctor's bungalow at Chhatarpur completed, and when she returned in 1923 she brought a doctor with her. Dr Ward was young and newly qualified, but the Board had been impressed by her potential. But from the outset things went wrong, and within a few weeks she had left, declaring that she 'would not be dictated to'. There was the root of the trouble. It is possible that, young and able as she was, Dr Ward was too impatient, too unwilling to listen to the older and more experienced woman. But did the Superintendent also fail to allow the doctor the necessary freedom to do her work in her own way?

The next woman doctor arrived early in 1925. Unlike Dr Ward, Mary Fleming was a mature woman with eight years experience of practice in tropical countries, including India. She settled into Chhatarpur with high ideals and high hopes, but soon felt frustrated. Ignoring the protocol she wrote direct to the Board, asking what use it was to appoint a doctor if

nothing were done to provide basic equipment? In spite of these difficulties she stuck to her job for nearly three years and made a favourable impression on the Board when she met them. But the story of the Rogers was repeated; she received no invitation to return to India. It seems possible that Pancham Singh was at the root of the trouble. After his courageous pioneering in Chhatarpur a dozen years earlier he had been Esther's right-hand man in the building work there; he had come to regard himself as indispensable, and to succumb to various temptations. Dr Fleming was aware of his weaknesses, and he seems to have retaliated by 'tale-bearing' to Esther, who had a great affection for her 'orphan boy'.

The misunderstanding between the Friends in the Hoshangabad area and the Board in London arose in a quite different way. On the one hand the strongly individualist ethos of late-Victorian England was expressed in the constantly recurring comment that one should not 'interfere' in a colleague's work. A Committee of Missionaries arranged where people should be posted to allow for the needs of furlough, etc., apart from which each of them did only 'what was right in their own eyes'. A Six-Month Meeting of the whole church, of which missionaries as individuals were a part, was the focus of church life. It chose its officers (often very wisely, as Henry Robson commented) and exercised oversight over the various local groups or 'Monthly Meetings'.

On the other hand Friends in Britain, whose country was directly involved politically with India, saw India very largely through the eyes of Rabindranath Tagore (who paid an extended visit to the west in 1920-21) and of those thoughtful Indian Christians whose sympathies were with the national aspirations. Two of these, G. C. Chatterji and K. T. Paul, spoke to the FFMA sessions at London Yearly Meeting in 1919. Indians, they said, did not want Christian sects, not even the Quaker one, but they did want the things which Friends stood for. India needed their 'practical mysticism', which enabled them both to share her sense of the 'immediacy of the supernatural' and at the same time to 'be friends' and help as equals with her present problems. After the war a new generation of Indian students was coming to Britain, among them some who had taken part in the striving for political and social reform. British Friends met them; two of them, Shoran S. Singha and Sucha Singh Khara, joined the Society. It was not surprising that young British Friends developed an image of 'India' which was far removed from the realities of that 'rural backwater' Hoshangabad. 'They think India is full of Tagores!' commented William Pitt.

This was the background of the crisis which confronted the FFMA in 1920. It had been brewing for a long time, long before the difficulties of the First World War brought it into the open. During the first decade of

the century, under the leadership of such men as Henry T. Hodgkin, the FFMA had changed, and its attitude was far removed from mere proselytisation. But the *name* 'missionary' remained, and to the young Friends who met at Kingsmead in 1909 it suggested as Geoffrey Maw said, 'an arrogant person who told everyone else they were wrong, and threatened them with hell-fire if they did not take his advice'. He himself had accepted the missionary label only with great reluctance, 'because there was no other'.<sup>1</sup> The war focussed Friends' attention on their peace testimony. Under Carl Heath's leadership they formed the Council for International Service which sent the Taylors to Calcutta; plans were made for an All Friends Peace Conference in 1920. Those who thought in the older 'missionary' terms were an ageing and diminishing group. Both money and recruits were in very short supply.

Friends in Britain therefore decided to amalgamate the FFMA and the Council for International Services and create a new body, the Friends Service Council, which should carry on the 'publishing of Truth' and the service of peace as one integrated whole. During the next few years the details were worked out, and the new body came into being at the beginning of 1927. They also decided that they would respond to the Indian desire for self-government by handing over to Indian Friends (now organised in the Mid-India Yearly Meeting) the control of the work in the Hoshangabad area. British Friends would continue to provide an annual grant, but decisions about how it should be used, and for what purposes, would be made by the Indian Yearly Meeting.

When these proposals reached India towards the end of 1920 they were received not with enthusiasm but with near-panic. British Friends had completely mis-read the situation, and were unaware that most Indian Friends dreaded the prospect of *swaraj*. Mission policies of earlier years had resulted in an almost total isolation from the larger community. They were cut off from the network of social obligation and social support provided both by Muslim tradition and by Hindu caste *biradiri*, and they therefore sought a substitute identity in 'the mission', whose missionaries were the leaders of the *biradiri* whose word was law. This attitude was understandable; it was the expression of a real need for psychological security. G. L. Narasimhan,<sup>2</sup> the only Indian Friend with a different outlook did a great deal to allay the panic, and to get consideration of the whole matter postponed for nearly a year so that there was a chance for calmer reflection.

Jack Hoyland, watching from Nagpur, had some wise comments, but they were not listened to, and the plan, brought into operation at the beginning of 1925, had serious defects. 'Too much, too soon,' Jack had said. It was too soon because Indian Friends had had no experience of common planning or common enterprise, and had little sense of *corporate*



responsibility to God and for one another. How could they, given the individualist attitudes which had prevailed? Lack of practice in seeking *together* 'the will of God' for their own situation was not something that could be remedied overnight. Jack also pointed out that the 'devolution scheme', as it was called, gave too much control over money to those who were themselves paid workers. With regard to education, his own special interest, he suggested that once a decision had been taken about the total amount available, a representative committee should make allocations on an equitable basis to the various institutions. Instead of this the Sohagpur Girls' School was excluded from the devolution scheme and funded separately, an arrangement which many people, including the experienced Geoffrey Maw, considered both unjust and unwise.

Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties and anxieties, some good work went on during those years. In 1920 Hilda Robson returned to the hospital, and Dr Stephen Jacob a one-time famine orphan who had qualified in India, came to work with her. New family wards were built, mainly for women and children; Dr Jacob held an out-patient clinic for all comers. No one 'preached at them'; the hospital witnessed to Truth by equal, fair and loving treatment for all comers whatsoever. Occasionally four-legged sufferers were brought; the most notable incident was when 'an exalted personage sent a royal command for treatment for an afflicted elephant'.

In 1925 the Robsons retired, and Robert and Eileen Gittins, who were both qualified doctors, took Hilda's place. Eleanor Burns became nursing sister, and the gentle Kampta Prasad became hospital clerk. The hospital was a happy place; Geoffrey Maw's children, playing with their Indian friends near by, could hear the cheerful music of the gramophone with which Eileen and Eleanor entertained their patients in the afternoons.

Better staffing meant that a village medical service also became possible, and Robert Gittins acquired a car for the purpose. A car was a novelty in the area, and the doctor's feats of driving were even more remarkable, for there were no roads to most villages, merely jungle tracks. An English visitor described the adventure of the journey, 'down precipitous ravines, across streams twisting and climbing up impossible banks . . . all at a tip top speed that makes your hair stand on end'.<sup>3</sup> When a village was reached it might sometimes need other services besides medical ones. There was a cattle-lifting tiger around, a nuisance to the whole neighbourhood. Would the doctor please bring his gun and track it down? Robert Gittins enjoyed that kind of sport, and he and Eileen stayed in Itarsi for almost five years, much longer than they had originally planned. Eleanor Burns however had to withdraw in 1928 because of continued ill-health. The Independent Methodist Church, which had continued to support the hospital generously ever since Dr Robinson had retired, sent

Edith Bevan to take her place. When the Gittins left in 1929 Gail Addison once more filled the doctors' place.

The Mid-India Yearly Meeting had a number of fine Indian workers. Nathulal had died in 1921, but Fakir Ibrahim was still at work and much beloved, especially among the Seoni schoolboys. There were younger men who had been trained along with Khushilal in the Bible School at Hoshangabad, such as Shivilal of Sehore, a one-time famine waif who knew his Bhopal State intimately, and who like Khushilal was both competent and humorous. Dhan Singh was in charge of the Yearly Meeting's office, situated in Rachel Metcalfe's former home in Hoshangabad. There were outstanding teachers, Din Mohammed Dar who thanks to Jack Hoyland had benefited from experience in England, John Robert in Hoshangabad and his brother Matthew and Kalu Ram in Seoni Malwa. The Yearly Meeting was also equipped with books which made possible for its members that serious study of the origin and principles of Friends which had been lacking before. Jack Hoyland had made a Hindi translation of E. B. Emmott's *Story of Quakerism*, and Francis Kilbey had translated both Edward Grubb's *What is Quakerism?* and Henry Hodgkin's *Lay Religion*.

Then there were the growing points. During the war years and after a number of Friends, many of whom had been trained at Rasulia, were employed at Jabalpur, the nearest big town. Some were in railway service, some worked in the Ordnance Factory – for they had never been encouraged to study the Quaker testimony against 'fighting with outward weapons'. They started a Meeting for Worship among themselves, and from 1916 onwards they had a great deal of spiritual support from Ethel Sharman. Ethel was not a Friend; she was a young woman born and educated in India, who had worked for the FFMA in Sehore from 1912 onwards, and was gifted and knowledgeable in Bible study and Sunday school work. In 1916 she had resigned from Sehore because her parents, who were then living in Jabalpur, needed her help. Her services to the young Meeting there were remembered with deep gratitude,<sup>4</sup> and by 1921 it was so well established that the Mid-India Yearly Meeting recognised it as a regular Monthly Meeting.

By 1921 Louise Walker had taken Priscilla Fowler's place in Bhopal, where Dr Johory still lived, and where other Friends were employed in the railway service. They attracted a remarkable man, Ganpat Lal Misra, who 20 years earlier had been dismissed from service by the Maharajah of Jeypore for the 'crime' of becoming a Christian.<sup>5</sup> He had since been a Judge in Agra, and in Bhopal he had won the respect of Hindus and Muslims alike. There were other Christians also who were very friendly particularly a bank manager called Blackman. Palace intrigue around the ageing Begum resulted in both Louise Walker and Prem Masih being

turned out of their rented houses, and Blackman came to the rescue. Some months later Louise got her house back (to the great joy of her neighbours) but Prem Masih never did; he had to take another in a much less convenient place. There were many 'inquirers', but the usual practice was to arrange for them to go elsewhere and so escape the persecution which might be their lot at home. Geoffrey Maw questioned this policy. Would it not be better to stick it and risk it? he asked.

In the older centres too there was life and growth. In Itarsi a Friend, Dr Mardan Singh, was doing an excellent job as the town's Health Officer; another, an old boy of the school, was starting an independent workshop. In Sohagpur not only did people help the Rachel Metcalfe Home by collecting and piercing the colourful jungle seeds used in Ann Kilbey's flourishing 'bead' industry; there was also friendly contact with the Anglican church. There was no longer any need for Friends to conduct their 'railway' services in the station waiting room. The beautiful little church was at their disposal, with perfect freedom to plan the services as they wished. In Hoshangabad Shiv Ram's temperance campaigns in village schools were in full swing. Everywhere the mission's paid workers accepted the decision that there could be no rise in salaries, and though prices soared there was little grumbling. Only in Makoriya was there discouragement. The Addisons had no sooner returned than Ratcliffe became critically ill; Gail's skill and devotion pulled him through, and in 1922 they decided to adopt children. The children, a boy and two girls, gave them joy and interest, but throughout that period of service Ratcliffe was so dogged by ill health that had it not been for the hospital's need of Gail in 1929 they would not have returned to India at all. Watching the Makoriya farmers in their difficulties Ratcliffe asked a prophetic question: 'Will two or three of the stronger ones absorb the rest?' That was, by and large, what happened later.

Yet even Makoriya had one fine achievement, the village school. Amy Montford visited on behalf of the new Friends Service Council in 1927. She had been one of the Young Friends who attended the conference in 1909, but had spent much of the intervening years teaching the younger children in Friends' schools in Britain, and what she saw in Makoriya delighted her.

I found the whole first class out of doors [she wrote], busy over a big ground plan of the village, marking houses, digging tiny wells, placing the school house and the dispensary. They knew what they were doing and were enjoying it. With the help of the master I told them I could only see two trees whose names I knew – what could *they* do? You should have seen them counting them up! There was a beautiful home-made history frieze round the schoolhouse wall, and when

the time came for games the master and his assistant played alongside the children. That master is greatly to be congratulated.<sup>6</sup>

And yet during a very few years nearly all of these living shoots had withered away. A moral rot set in; when Robert and Eileen Gittins reached Itarsi towards the end of 1924 they were shocked at what seemed to them to be the general moral collapse. In the Meeting cheating and embezzlement were rife, along with merciless bullying of those humble Friends who tried to remain honest. In 1925 Mid-India Yearly Meeting took action and suspended Itarsi Monthly Meeting for its failure to maintain minimum ethical standards. There were failures elsewhere too, for fears and jealousies were beginning to poison the atmosphere, but the trouble came to a head first in Itarsi, and it is not difficult to see why.

The other 'stations' of the mission were all ancient towns; Hoshangabad, Seoni Malwa, Sohagpur, and Bhopal and Sehore further north, all had some sense of identity and community. Their people felt that they 'belonged'. Itarsi was a mushroom growth, developed in the space of a few years because it was the site of a major junction. It had become more populous even than Hoshangabad the District headquarters; there were more Friends than in any other centre, but the Friends, like the rest of the population, were there simply to make a living, and to make the best living they could. There was no sense of common obligation either as Friends or as citizens.

In Itarsi too another factor came into play. A large number of the Friends there made their living in some form of railway service, and were therefore financially independent of the mission in a way that the evangelists, teachers and domestic servants were not. This in itself was an intrinsically healthy thing; in 1920-21 Khushilal and one or two other valiant spirits had voluntarily given up their mission pay and tried to earn their living by simple farm labour and to 'publish Truth' along with their daily work. The experiment did not succeed – the daily labour proved too onerous – but it was made from the highest motives. The 'railway Christians' in Itarsi however used their independence not to publish Truth, but to publicise what they regarded as the failures of the mission in a way that often lacked charity or compassion. From 1922 onwards they began to appear in mission reports as 'the discontented party'.

On the other hand those who depended on mission employment were inevitably tempted to become 'yes men', unwilling to speak openly about mistakes or wrong doing. Inevitably too there was mutual suspicion and jealousy: why should X get more pay than I do? Did Y secure that scholarship by currying favour with the missionary? Was I passed over because I was merely a servant's son? Such suspicions may have been quite unfounded, but they were there, and one of the victims was Shiv Ram

Herring. He did good work among the boys, both in the hostel in Hoshangabad and in the villages, but he was sometimes tactless, and there was little mutual trust between him and his fellow-workers, who regarded him as 'an outsider'. When he and his wife were advised to seek employment elsewhere<sup>7</sup> they considered that they had been unjustly dismissed. Jack Hoyland helped them to find work in Nagpur but they greatly distressed him by their bitterness.

Greed in fact was at the heart of this moral and spiritual weakness, greed fuelled by the fears of a rootless, insecure group. It led both 'railway Christians' and mission employees to claim that all resources should be used for the benefit of 'Christians only'. Geoffrey Maw was living once more in Itarsi and knew the individuals concerned intimately. The leader of the discontent belonged to a family, originally from Bengal, which had settled there when the father became Headmaster of the first Friends High School in the 1890's. They had acquired family land in Itarsi and the son had been chosen to represent Mid-India Friends at the All-Friends Peace Conference in 1920. His contact there with seemingly prosperous English Friends made him 'unable to believe' that there could be any shortage of money, or any reason why it should not be available to Friends in India. There is no indication that the cause of peace, the central theme of the conference, meant anything to him, and when he returned it was not to work for Friends but to become Headmaster of a High School in a distant part of the Province. His interest in Itarsi was his land, and the 'discontented party'.

Geoffrey Maw, in the midst of this sordid and sometimes 'venomous' abuse (his own adjective) patiently upheld the vision of a better way – and a better way *might* perhaps have been found. The initiative came from the vigorous group of Friends in Madras, who were in touch with *The Christian Patriot* and with the local branch of Gokhale's Servants of India Society. The Meetings for Worship were being attended by 'true seekers' among the members of the Ramakrishna Mission, and by Hindu 'disciples of Christ' who like those in Calcutta remained in the community of their birth. In 1924-25, just when the crisis in Itarsi was at its height, the Friends in Madras were feeling the need to look at the work in India as a whole; as a first step they arranged a conference in which V. Srinivasa Sastri, the distinguished Madras statesman who was then President of the Servants of India Society, also took part, and where a number of ideas were given an airing.

One suggestion was that each local Meeting should aim at being an 'embassy of goodwill' in its own neighbourhood, a centre of religious fellowship, study and service in which other like-minded people might share. Srinivasa Sastri agreed; all branches of the Servants of India Society, he said, would welcome Quaker participation in work for women and for

untouchables. What a breath of fresh air that might have brought into the stuffy, self-enclosed atmosphere of Mid-India! – and Jack Hoyland had already pointed the way.

Another suggestion was that Madras or any similar group might be recognised as a Monthly Meeting, able to admit new members and to transfer them as need arose to and from other Monthly Meetings. A plan of this kind might have provided the framework within which Indians like Shoran Singha and Sucha Khera, and others in Lahore and Bombay, could have been linked with the Society in their native land. It might even have been the nucleus of a future Indian Yearly Meeting, able to accommodate local Monthly Meetings of a variety of traditions. It did not happen, for two reasons. One was the British failure to understand the realities of the Indian situation. The London committee suggested a Monthly Meeting for the whole of south India, an area a good deal larger and more varied than all the British Isles put together! The other was that Madras hesitated because of possible 'lack of continuity' – in a field where, it could be argued, continuity was *not* essential! Patterns of organisation familiar to British Friends were not necessarily suited to the conditions of a sub-continent.

A third proposal was to use the Rasulia compound for an 'Indian Woodbrooke' a centre of fellowship and study. Jack Hoyland supported the idea. Let there be simple, 'ashram-style' accommodation, he said, with a library and a book-centre; let there be summer schools, youth camps, retreats and study courses, dealing with the 'indivisible whole' of Quaker religious and social concern. Such a centre might even take over *The Guardian* (then struggling for its life in Calcutta) and make it the vehicle of friendly scrutiny of Indian affairs which Joseph Taylor had always wanted it to be. Rasulia was the right place; the new rail link from Itarsi to Nagpur and the south was about to be completed, making it accessible from all sides, and situated as it was in the middle of Hoshangabad district it might bring the Friends of central India into contact with the city Meetings to their mutual benefit.

Madras Friends hoped that these ideas might be considered at an all-India gathering, and a good opportunity occurred very soon, in February 1926. A British Quaker delegation, representing both the FFMA and the Council for International Service, was on a visit to India, and the Mid-India Yearly Meeting arranged a special conference with them at Hoshangabad. All the finest and most thoughtful Friends were present, and they listened with sympathy when their guest-speaker, Manilal Parikh,<sup>8</sup> pleaded that the Quaker message had an all-India relevance and that their work should be seen in that wider perspective. When some one asked what such a small body as Friends could hope to do, it was the

veteran Fakir Ibrahim who answered: 'A mosquito can move an elephant, if it gets in his ear!'

Only the previous year Jack Hoyland and the Madras Friends had put forward a number of ideas for 'getting in the ear' of India. Why were they not invited to share them? Why was no one outside the membership of the Yearly Meeting asked to the conference? – probably because those who organised it were as yet scarcely aware of the presence of other Friends in India.<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Maw might perhaps have got these 'scattered Friends' invited, for after Joseph Taylor left India it was he who maintained contact with them, but it was not in Geoffrey's retiring, self-effacing nature to thrust himself forward, even in a good cause. So the opportunity was lost, and the conference was felt to have been disappointing; 'over-long' speeches left no time for the real exchange of thought which might have taken place.

The British delegation in 1925-26 represented a different and much less effective attempt by British Friends to get into India's ear. They arranged lecture tours in the major cities and universities, by Herbert Catford in 1923, by Edmund Harvey, Percy Bigland and Catherine Albright in 1925-26, and by John W. Graham in 1927-28. They and their lectures were very well received, but as Joseph Taylor had commented from the first, such 'Quaker tourists' could make no lasting impact. Probably the most valuable result of the visits was the increased understanding of India which they, particularly Edmund Harvey, acquired. Such lectures were no substitute for the network of quiet, local 'embassies of goodwill' which *might* have operated in Madras, Bombay, Lahore and elsewhere, or for a permanent 'powerhouse' such as an 'Indian Woodbrooke' at Rasulia might have provided.

John W. Graham's visit in 1927-28 however did spark off a significant response. More than 40 years earlier he had been a fellow-student in Cambridge of Theodore Beck and Philip Sturge, and he therefore had a specially warm welcome in Aligarh and in Hyderabad. Not long afterwards Ernest Ludlam, an ex-Cambridge Friend then working in Edinburgh University, was approached informally – could he find a Quaker teacher for the Aligarh Muslim University? That might have been a most valuable piece of service, but no one could be found.<sup>10</sup> The request was probably made because Graham's visit re-awakened memories of Beck's life-long devotion to the College.

The need, both in Aligarh and elsewhere, was for *more* such long-term, quiet commitment. In Hoshangabad there were empty places and few recruits to fill them. Alfred and Florence Taylor retired; 'Uncle' Alfred Henry Smith had already done so in 1921; he had had to undergo a serious and painful operation which seems to have decided him that the time had come. He paid cheerful farewell visits to all the Friends' stations, and to

Pandita Ramabai's Home which he had helped, as auditor, for years; everywhere his plea was for mutual understanding and forbearance; 'Let truth' he said, 'be presented in *all* its phases.'<sup>11</sup> Three or four years later the Kilbeys also withdrew. They should 'make room for younger workers,' they said, and they also wanted to make a home for their own sons and daughters. Younger workers however were not easily found; the first new recruit, Mary Allen, was already in her late 40's when she took Ann Kilbey's place in the Rachel Metcalfe Home.

Mary Allen had been born in 1880; she had lived in humble circumstances in an English village, and had been trained in the care of children. When and where she became a Friend, and what took her to work with American Friends in Jamaica, is not known. Her name appears in 1900 as one of their first two women workers, and a year or two later she was in charge of an orphanage for 'East Indian' girls at the Happy Grove School; later she adopted one of them, Lucille Ananda Sibouy, as her own daughter. Few records are available, but one or two surviving contributions to mission reports show her humour, tough commonsense, and affectionate understanding of the needs of the children. Describing a controversy with bureaucratic officialdom over the welfare of the orphans, she comments: 'I did not give in; being English I wouldn't!' She won her battle, and stayed on in Happy Grove till 1922, when the school was reorganised.

Mary then returned to England, taking with her the 15 year old Lucille. She found Lucille a happy home as a 'mother's help' in a Quaker family in Bristol, and she herself went off to Calcutta, probably to visit one or more of her 'East Indian' charges at Happy Grove who had returned to the land of their origin. From Calcutta in 1924 she paid a leisured happy visit to the American Friends in Nowgong. Charlotte Bai was then nearing retirement, and it was arranged that the following year Mary should take her place in the orphanage. Accordingly in October 1925 after Lucille, now 18, had entered a Birmingham hospital to begin her training as a nurse, Mary went back to Nowgong. Only a few weeks later she had left. The reason is not clear; perhaps mature and experienced as she was, she found Esther Baird as difficult a colleague as did Mary Fleming in Chhatarpur. She returned to England, where in 1926 she was accepted by the FFMA for the Rachel Metcalfe Home at Sohagpur.

Soon afterwards the widowed Elizabeth Butler, whose children were now grown up, was invited to Bhopal by the Indian Friends there, and settled there for the rest of her life. In 1928 a younger recruit *was* found; Olive Shepherd came to work in the Sohagpur School, where her enthusiasm for Girl Guides soon left its mark. The need for better

provision for the growing boys was recognised, and in 1931 a man was found. Stanley Ashton, who had been a lay worker for about a year in the Oxford Mission in Calcutta, was sent by the Friends Service Council to work among boys in Itarsi, and reached India in the spring of 1932. He was very popular with the boys, but he did not succeed in learning even elementary Hindi, and such serious misunderstandings arose that before the end of 1933 his colleagues asked the London committee to withdraw him.<sup>12</sup> The Institute which he had opened in Itarsi was carried on during 1934 by Henry Robson, who had come back for a year's visit; he had always enjoyed the company of boys.

A recruit of a different kind was Heinz von Tucher, a young German of a landed family who, seeking an opportunity for service in India, found it with Friends. They sent him first to Woodbrooke where he met his Danish wife Karen, and then in 1930 to Makoriya – for the Addisons had gone to Itarsi. Like some of their British colleagues they had financial resources of their own. As for Geoffrey Maw, he was in Nagpur helping the Hislop College and the Friends' Hostel.

In Bundelkhand also there were changes. Mary Fleming did not return, and in the summer of 1928 Margaret Smith died suddenly and unexpectedly. Walter Bolitho came to develop the agricultural work in which she had taken so much interest; his wife Geneva was a gifted minister whose service to the Meetings for Worship was much appreciated. Ruth Hull took Mary Fleming's place as the doctor in Chhatarpur; she brought with her much-needed equipment, a good deal of it provided out of her own pocket. Alena Calkins, a trained nurse, came to work with her, but before settling in Chhatarpur she took a course in midwifery in Madras.<sup>13</sup> Ruth Thurston the teacher spent a summer vacation at the India Sunday School Union in Coonoor to benefit from Edward Annett's courses there. Her fiancé Robert Earle, and a second nurse Nell Lewis, followed. There was also another married couple, James and Judith Kinder, who (the Board hoped) might succeed Esther (now nearing 70) when she retired. It was a strong team.

Esther herself had no thought of retiring until her long-cherished dream of a hospital at Chhatarpur was realised. There was already a dispensary, a chapel, and some houses for workers; in 1929 the Maharajah gave her land sufficient for a hospital building. That was a year of severe economic depression in America, but money was mysteriously available, and Esther set to work. She strained every nerve to get the building finished and equipped by December 1930 when the Viceroy's wife, Lady Irwin, was to visit Bundelkhand. All her colleagues gave her their loyal support, and the job was done. Lady Irwin paid her visit, and at Christmas the Friends held a joyful dedication service. The

formal official opening took place in January 1931, and only then was the mystery of where the money had come from solved. A stone was set in place and unveiled; it recorded that the hospital was a memorial to Elizabeth Jane Bell Stephenson, and had been built by the gifts of her two daughters, one of whom was Treasurer to the Mission Board.

Esther's dream was realised, and she went on leave to America. Before she left, however, she made the Board promise that in spite of her age they would send her back to India. Carrie Wood was appointed as Acting Superintendent, and had to deal with all the problems which had been pushed aside while energies were concentrated on completing the hospital.

Walter Bolitho had been keenly disappointed when his request for a modest capital investment for the farm was refused. Not knowing the secret of the separate funding, he asked whether a hospital was so much more important than life-sustaining farming? Esther did not regard such questions with favour, and Walter put aside his doubts and helped to complete the hospital buildings. While Esther was on leave he undertook oversight of these. On one occasion this meant spending the night there, and he innocently asked the nurse on night duty for a small service. She was missed and questioned, she panicked and lied, and people began to gossip – but not for long. The facts were soon known, Carrie Wood warned Walter to be more careful to avoid giving the smallest excuse for gossip, and that should have been the end of the matter. Carrie however, in writing to Esther Baird, happened to tell her the story. Suddenly Walter received from the Board a notice of summary dismissal 'for inexcusable indiscretion', and Carrie received a stern rebuke for dealing with the matter without consultation!

The expulsion of the Bolithos was a grievous shock to the Indian members of the church, who greatly loved them both, and had shared their sorrow when two of their babies had died in succession. There were other sources of discontent in addition to this. The cuts and arrears in salaries which had resulted from the depression were causing a good deal of hardship especially among the lower-paid mission employees. Moreover it was impossible that Bundelkhand should not be affected by the great upsurge of national feeling associated with the popular 'civil disobedience' movement of 1930. A proposal came before the Monthly Meeting that Indian workers should share with the missionaries in the planning of the work. It was a wise and reasonable request, but it called out no response.

The general dissatisfaction was voiced by a former mission orphan who (like the 'railway Christians' of Itarsi) was in independent employment.

In the spring of 1932 this man ('Bram' or Brown) wrote direct to the Board about the reasons for Indians' discontent. The Board sent his letter to Carrie Wood, and Brown was ordered to 'prove' his charges. Many of his criticisms were valid, but all attention was fixed on some others which were exaggerated or distorted. Brown acknowledged that he had no 'right' to address the Board, he apologised in writing to those who felt wronged, but because it was 'the wish of the Board' he was disowned and though his faith was not in doubt he was never re-instated. It was a tragic business. If British Friends had erred by thrusting responsibility too soon on to an unprepared group, the Americans erred by withholding it too long.

Later in the same year, 1932, Esther Baird returned to India, and the long-brewing crisis came to a head. Situations arose which shocked the younger missionaries. Pancham Singh so openly disregarded mission rules that he 'resigned or was dismissed', but still went on working for Esther on a contract basis, and acted as a *rakhwal* (Elder/Overseer) in the Monthly Meeting. William Parsad was still running the dispensary in Harpalpur with the help of his son, but had become alcoholic. James Kinder, who was stationed there, had grounds for suspecting that in the schools under Gorelal's management the evaluation of examination results was not always wholly impartial. Both the Kinders and the Earles were distressed; it was surely unjust that such failings in senior workers should be ignored, while others were harshly disciplined for more venial faults. William Parsad certainly deserved compassion; he acknowledged his fault and promised to give up drink, but did not find it easy. He was in fact a very sick man, and in 1935 he died in Nowgong.

Meanwhile in 1933 James Kinder took steps to improve matters in the schools, and this led to a campaign against him by those who felt threatened. A meeting of the Mission Council took place at which he could not be present; led by Pancham Singh, it despatched to the Board a letter full of complaints against him. Motilal and his former student Stuti Prakash protested strongly against this action but were unable to prevent it. The Board's reply reached Bundelkhand in 1934, and was so ambiguous that it satisfied no one. The Kinders, the Earles and Ruth Lewis all resigned (though they did not all leave immediately) and Motilal and his wife Shanti did the same. Stuti Prakash after much agonised prayer, decided to remain; so did Shanti's sister Grace, who had recently qualified as a doctor and joined Ruth Hull in Chhatarpur.<sup>14</sup> Ruth and Alena both went on leave, and it was Grace who then kept the hospital open, almost single-handed.

The only foreigners then left in the mission were Esther Baird and Carrie Wood. The five young rebels compelled the Board to recognise the gravity of the situation by composing a 22-point critique which they called *Do You Know?*, and which they sent to every pastor of the Ohio Yearly Meeting. At long last the Board took action; they appointed Dr Walter R. Williams as Mission Superintendent for India and China, and sent him to India in the winter of 1935-36 empowered to deal with the crisis. He spent about five months in patient consultation with everyone concerned, including British Friends in Hoshangabad and concluded that the statements in *Do You Know?* were essentially justified. He told the Board that they were to blame for not listening to their younger missionaries, and for not making it clear to the Superintendent that she held authority not as an individual but as the mouthpiece of a team. He talked gently but plainly to Esther herself, which was not easy either for him or for her.

Shortly afterwards Carrie Wood retired, and 1936 brought new faces and a new start – as 1934 brought new faces and a new start for the English Friends in Hoshangabad district. In 1937, just before her own retirement, Esther Baird received the gold Kaiser-i-Hind medal, in recognition of her service to Bundelkhand for more than 40 years. The final year had brought peace after the storm, contentment and renewed hope.

## Notes to Chapter XVII

- 1 A later reluctant 'missionary' called himself instead 'a religious devotee'.
- 2 Nalin Ganguly was not then in India.
- 3 Letter from Amy Montford to Friends in the U.K., 12th December 1927, p.4. (Friends House Library, London.)
- 4 Louise Walker described Ethel Sharman's influence in letters to the FFMA.
- 5 *The Indian Social Reformer* printed a scathing comment on this incident. 'The Maharajah has no jurisdiction over souls', wrote the editor.
- 6 See 3, above. Amy Montford had been among the young Friends at the Kingsmead Conference in 1909 and had spent many years teaching in the U.K. at the Mount School in York and elsewhere.
- 7 By Alfred Taylor, who valued their services but saw the friction.
- 8 Manilal Parikh was the co-author of a book on Gandhi published by the YMCA in Calcutta in 1924.



9 R.D.Priestman and H.Robson were present at the Madras gathering, but Robson had left India immediately afterwards and Priestman had only just returned after five years' absence.

10 The incident is remembered clearly by Ernest Ludlam's son and daughter Martin and Pippa Ludlam.

11 Alfred and Harriet Smith had twenty years of retirement in the Croydon area, where he was still 'Uncle'.

12 In 1934 Ashton went to work for the YMCA in Kingston, Jamaica.

13 Nursing courses in the USA did not then include midwifery.

14 Shanti and Grace were daughters of Harbi Bai, granddaughters of Duoji Bai.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Learning from India : 1920 to 1934

*Bind me, O Lord, to all my fellows –  
and set me free from bondage.  
May every act of mine  
throb with the pulses of Thy song.*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

IN 1912 the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, the first writer outside Europe to be so honoured. He visited England and was received in literary circles with great enthusiasm; some of his poetry was published in English translation in *Gitanjali* (song-offerings) and other volumes.

Only two years later such international friendliness was shattered by the national passions of the First World War. What might be done, asked Tagore, to restore the broken vision of a world-wide human family? His own answer was to create a *Viswa-Bharati*, a World University, in his educational centre at Santiniketan in Bengal. A world university, in his eyes, should serve 'one single country which is this earth, where races no less than individuals must find *both* freedom for self-expression *and* bonds of federation'. Moreover it could only serve effectively if it were universal in another sense; it must not be an 'ivory tower' of learning, it must be involved in the daily life and work of its own neighbourhood. A *Viswa-Bharati* at Santiniketan must not only draw scholars from other lands, it must serve the villages around it.

It was therefore part of Tagore's plan that the old *nil-kuti* (indigo house) at Surul, two miles away, should become a *Sriniketan*, a centre of good and gracious village life. In 1920-1921 he visited Europe and America to seek fellow-workers in this enterprise; scholars responded, but only at the very end did he find, in New York, a man to help with Sriniketan.

This was Leonard Elmhirst, who came of an old land-owning family in Yorkshire, and who had already been drawn to India by reading *Gitanjali*. One of his teachers at school had been Jack Hoyland's cousin D. C. Somervell, who made a never forgotten comment: 'People should not only *read* the Gospels, they should *live* them.' Not long afterwards, at Cambridge, Elmhirst had met another inspiring teacher, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, who had visited India in 1912. He had completed his course, in spite of the war, because he was physically unfit for military service. It was then, in 1915, that he read *Gitanjali* and volunteered to serve in the YMCA in India.

Two years later, still in India, Elmhirst met an older Englishman named Sam Higginbottom. Higginbottom, who had began life as a very poor boy from the slums of Manchester, had got himself an education by his own determined efforts, and had then volunteered for Christian service in India. He joined the staff of the Ewing Christian College at Allahabad to teach economics, and as he knew nothing of Indian conditions he took his students for observation in villages. The experience led him to make a practical study of agriculture in the United States, and when Elmhirst met him he was building up an Agricultural Institute at Naini, across the Yamuna opposite Allahabad. Elmhirst joined him, acted as his secretary and worked on the farm; when the war was over he too went to the United States to study agriculture so that he might return to help Higginbottom at Naini.

Higginbottom's Mission however did not approve, for Elmhirst had come to feel (like so many before him) that 'the old creeds do not reflect my experience or satisfy my reason'. He therefore had to look elsewhere. Higginbottom knew of Tagore's search for fellow-workers in Viswa-Bharati, so he wrote and suggested Elmhirst as a possible recruit for the rural wing. In March 1921 Tagore met him in New York.

Tagore was then 60 years old, Elmhirst only 28, but the attraction was mutual. Elmhirst found Tagore to be 'a very human human being' full of humour and mischief, and Tagore enjoyed being treated as such. 'Would you come back with me to India tomorrow?' he asked. Elmhirst, taken by surprise, protested. 'Not *tomorrow*! Let me finish my course first! But then, I *will* come.'

Elmhirst reached Santiniketan about six months later. The non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 had taken place during Tagore's absence from India, and the poet was unhappy about its development in Bengal. Students had left the Government colleges in Calcutta and come to Santiniketan, many of them interested only in political agitation. Not long before Elmhirst arrived Tagore met Gandhi, and talked with him about 'the cult of selfish nationalism' in India. He now spoke equally freely to Elmhirst:

We dare not shut the west out; India has much to learn. She has also something to *give*, but in order to give, we ourselves must learn to work together.

He and Elmhirst worked together, and Elmhirst was very happy in Surul, while the most 'undesirable' political agitators were got rid of.

In May 1922 Viswa-Bharati was publicly inaugurated and its goal defined:

. . . to bring the cultures of the East into relationship with one another . . . to realise the meeting of East and West, and thereby to strengthen the conditions (for) human concord and world peace.

Much was done towards this goal. A young Muslim scholar devoted himself to both Viswa-Bharati's 'wings', teaching Persian and Arabic, and also spending time on the farm and in the villages, making friends with Hindu and Muslim alike.<sup>1</sup> Elmhirst himself realised the importance both of the village school, and of adult education for 'the good life'. The people's material, cultural and social needs may all be met, he wrote, 'by continuous education in a community bound together by human kindness, free from fear and competition,' learning together 'from the cradle to the grave', as Gandhi put it later.

In 1925 a Bengal government report commented on Viswa-Bharati's external simplicity, its standards of research 'attractive to men of high calibre in other lands', and its active cooperation with other centres of learning. 'Its existence is an enrichment of the educational resources of the Province', the report concluded. By that time however Elmhirst was no longer there; Tagore had wanted him as companion on a journey to South America in 1924, and after that he did not return, but married. His wife Dorothy was a wealthy American whom he had first met in 1920 when an agriculture student. He and she continued to pioneer in education in England, at Dartington Hall in Devon.

Early in 1926 Tagore's son-in-law Professor Ganguly, on a visit to London, met Muriel Lester. Muriel, like Leonard Elmhirst, was of good family, but for 15 years she had lived in voluntary poverty among the very poor in Bow.<sup>2</sup> She was also a convinced Christian pacifist and worked for international peace, along with many Friends, in the Fellowship of Reconciliation. She had already met the Indian Trade Union leader N. M. Joshi and had begun to read Gandhi's *Young India*. Ganguly invited her to visit India and to meet Tagore and Gandhi in person. She eagerly accepted, and spent the last three months of 1926, with her 18 year old nephew as her companion, travelling in India. She went first to Gandhi's ashram at Sabarmati, and soon found that most of the Indians she met there were as ignorant of England as most English people were of India.

He had used his skill to help the poor, Hindu and Muslim alike. They all loved him, and Gandhi told the meeting that the best memorial to his life would be a lasting mutual goodwill between the two communities. There was a generous response, and a spirit of give-and-take which seemed to augur well for the future.

Fenner Brockway had been chosen as a fraternal delegate to this meeting of the Congress, and had joined his sister in Madras a few days before it began. She suggested that they might visit some of the villages where her former students were working, and Fenner welcomed the chance to see something of rural India. The visit was paid, but on the way back their hired car met with an accident; Norah was badly bruised, Fenner seriously injured. When the Congress met he was in a Madras hospital, where Gandhi paid him a cheery visit. The upshot was what he called 'A Week in India – and Three Months in an Indian Hospital',<sup>7</sup> but the one week had taught him much, and on his return to Britain he became closely associated with Friends' Indian interests.

While Fenner was in hospital a plan was carried out to bring together the score or so of International Fellowships which had been formed in various places, into an all-India federation. The inaugural meeting was held in Gandhi's Sabarmati ashram and at his invitation. He did not deal this time with the 'international' aspect of the Fellowships, but with the contribution they might make to that 'give-and-take' between religious communities for which he had appealed at the Madras Congress.

Our prayer for others should be [he said], not that they should follow the same path as we do, but that they should find and follow the path which is best for themselves.

One of those present at this meeting was a young member of the Pune International Fellowship named Verrier Elwin. Elwin was a brilliant Oxford scholar who in 1927 had joined the Christa Seva Sangha,<sup>8</sup> and had at once begun to study Indian traditions of religious devotion and relate them to their Christian counterparts. His meeting with Gandhi in Sabarmati led him to study also 'Christ and Satyagraha', and a few years later to move on from Pune to serve the Gond people of the Satpura ranges, where his pathway crossed with Friends'.

Horace Alexander met Gandhi a few weeks later.<sup>9</sup> It was not difficult for him to accept Gandhi's principle that 'true religion must show itself in the smallest details of life', but he felt challenged by the contrasting ways in which Sabarmati and Santiniketan approached those details. At Sabarmati there was strict routine and the discipline of ordered work; at Santiniketan an attempt to awaken the soul through aesthetic expression. Yet, Horace concluded, 'I think their goal is the same: the growth of a strong, enlightened people.' In the course of his travels he had met many

enlightened *individuals*; he had also seen aspects of British rule which enabled him to understand why these men and women were impatient to get rid of it. He carried back to England the message Gandhi gave him for his fellow-countrymen: 'We want you to get off our backs.'

The meeting with Gandhi also taught Horace that this political aim, significant as it was, was for Gandhi one means to something deeper, growth in knowledge of Truth. East and West, thought Horace, tend to see different facets of Truth; might they not learn from one another? But if one is to *learn*, one must be ready for genuine give-and-take.

There are plenty of people in India as in the West [he wrote] who need to be turned from darkness to light, from fear to love, from self to service . . . Christ-like lives seem to be the only force that can save the world.

What was needed, in fact, was people who could *live* as Christians without having to belong to a separate Christian community. That is very much what Charles Gayford and his friends had said, in Hoshangabad 50 years before.

There were other less serious memories of Sabarmati – of Gandhi 'marching briskly along, with half a dozen children dancing along beside him' on his evening walks. These and other children were fascinated by Horace's binoculars (which he always carried because of his passion for bird-study). He let them experiment, and they looked through the wrong end and chuckled to see each other so small and far away. 'I had no idea, he wrote, 'what a lot of delight my binoculars would give.' His own delight in the children was another bond with Gandhi.

In 1919, after the First World War ended, there was a renewed influx of Indian students into British universities. Indian Student Associations were formed, the YMCA opened special hostels to meet their needs, and a number of them came into contact with Friends, some of whom took a special interest in the YMCA hostel at Edinburgh. One of the students there, Shoran S. Singha, felt so much in unity with Quaker principles that he applied for membership, and was admitted to the Society in July 1921. One of the things which drew him to Friends was their witness against selfish materialist nationalism, for his outlook was that of Tagore. After he had completed his studies he joined the staff of the YMCA, and was posted in the London area. Percy Horne, who in pre-war days had edited the Bombay *Guardian*, gave him a warm welcome to Kingston Monthly Meeting.

Another Indian student, Sucha Singh Khera, became a member of the Friends House Meeting in London. There was a lively Young Friends group, whose interest in India had been kindled by Tagore's visit in 1920. Sucha married one of them, Veida Greer. He himself had been accepted

for the Indian Civil Service, and in 1925 he was appointed to Sitapur, 50 miles north of Lucknow. There he and Veida had good neighbours in Dr and Mrs Stanley Jones, who had known and admired Joseph and Katherine Taylor and were firm friends of the Calcutta *Guardian*. Stanley Jones' own book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, reflected a spirit of intellectual and spiritual adventure akin to that of Samuel Stokes in Kotgarh and Jack Hoyland in Nagpur.

When Horace Alexander returned to England in the spring of 1928 with Gandhi's message to Britain, many people were urging Gandhi to lead a campaign for an Indian-made constitution embodying full Dominion status. Gandhi, who believed (as he had told Muriel Lester) in giving his opponents a chance, persuaded Congress to give Britain 'a year of grace' in which to meet India's claims. During that year, 1929, a Labour government took office in London, and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, went to confer with the new cabinet. He returned with proposals for a Round Table Conference in 1930 at which the future pattern of Indian government would be framed in consultation with Indian representatives. This was a welcome move, but the Labour leaders were not themselves politically secure, and in the face of powerful opposition in Britain they were unable to give clear assurance that the pattern would be one of Dominion status, and without that assurance the Congress refused to attend.

In the autumn of 1929 another English Friend, Reginald Reynolds, reached India. He was a young man of 24; after leaving school in his late 'teens he had spent two years studying international affairs with Horace Alexander in Woodbrooke. While he was there, he was impressed by college performances of some of Laurence Housman's *Little Plays of St Francis*. Housman, poet and dramatist, friend of Henry Fawcett and admirer of Tagore, lived in Somerset, and when Reynolds went to work for a Quaker business firm there he sought him out and valued his guidance. But Reynolds was not a success in business; he knew it, and in 1929 decided to give up his job. What next?

His Woodbrooke teacher Horace Alexander suggested a visit to India and got him an invitation from Gandhi; an unexpected financial 'wind-fall' covered expenses, and off he went. He visited the Kheras, and was shocked to see an Englishman stride into Sucha's court and interrupt an important case with an arrogant demand for a gun-licence which he could easily have got through regular channels. Such incidents made him long to be 'an ambassador of repentance', and in that mood he attended the Congress meeting at Lahore in December 1929. There for the first time he saw Gandhi and recorded his impression: 'Such a dear old man (Gandhi then was 60), with the same mixture of sense and sobriety, and shrewd economical humour', as an Elder in a Quaker Meeting! But he also saw

that 'what draws people is that simplest and rarest of things, his absolute sincerity'.

At that Congress meeting the historic resolution on independence was adopted and 26th January 1930 declared 'Independence Day'; Gandhi was authorised to launch a new non-cooperation movement as and when he saw fit. Once more Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, stating the conditions on which conflict could be avoided. He asked Reg Reynolds to deliver his letter, and told him what it contained. It made no political demands, but asked for measures to relieve the burdens on the poor. Lord Irwin did not respond, and in March 1930 Gandhi left Sabarmati to start his campaign. To the surprise of many Congressmen it took the form of a 'salt march' to the sea-coast, a direct challenge to the unpopular and controversial salt monopoly against which Friends and others had been protesting for over 100 years! Reg Reynolds wanted to march also, but Gandhi would not allow it, so after helping for a time to edit Gandhi's paper *Young India* he returned to England to watch events from there.

The Salt March reached the sea at Dandi in the first days of April. Gandhi formally disobeyed the law by scraping up a handful of salt from the beach; the action was the signal for 'the most spontaneous, widespread and intense'<sup>10</sup> of all the public campaigns. All round the coast, from the Salt Lakes of Calcutta to the salt creeks north of Bombay, people came out in thousands to make illegal salt. Volunteers blockaded a government salt depot; remaining quietly non-violent under the blows of the police. Women came out of their seclusion to picket drinkshops and the merchants who sold foreign cloth. Richard Gregg came back to India to witness what he called, in the book he wrote later, *The Power of Non-Violence*.

Politically-minded students took little part; many of them sympathised with the terrorists who raided the government armoury at Chittagong at the end of April. Up to then the Government had watched and waited; now it struck both at secret terrorists and at open, non-violent salt-makers. Gandhi was arrested at the beginning of May, with a show of armed force which led Indian newspapers, remembering Gandhi's reverence for Jesus, to quote from the Gospel: 'Are you come with swords and staves to take me, as if I were a thief?'<sup>11</sup>

A week or two later British Friends held their Yearly Meeting in London. Rabindranath Tagore was again in England, and spoke to them. 'We Indians,' he said, 'want the privilege of serving our own country in our own way,' and he asked for Friends' help in realising 'that greatest of human rights, freedom.' The following day Young Friends devoted the whole of their special meeting to considering what he had said, and chose Myrtle Aldren Wright, who had been working for international understanding ever since she was a student at Cambridge in the mid-20's, to place their

concern before the whole Yearly Meeting. There were some, she said, who 'feared the consequences of freedom because of their love for India'; could they not take the risks of freedom, if that were the leading of God? The minute of the Yearly Meeting echoed her words: 'Our Quaker belief inspires us to take the risks of freedom rather than maintain tutelage.'

Action followed. Five Friends, among them Carl Heath and T. Edmund Harvey, were chosen to form a 'Committee for Indian Affairs'. They sought interviews with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, and voiced Friends' desire for reconciliation. In the course of the Yearly Meeting Shoran Singha had reminded Friends of what Indian delegates had said to the Edinburgh conference 20 years before: 'We ask for love; give us *friends*'. The Committee sent Horace Alexander back to India, carrying a letter from Tagore, to be a *friend*.

Horace set to work 'to show each side the better nature of the other'. Lord Irwin welcomed him, and readily made it possible for him to see the imprisoned Gandhi and other Indian leaders. Horace also met many Indian government officials who (as Irwin well knew) shared the national aspiration to freedom, and regarded their work as a way to prepare themselves to give free India an honest and competent civil service. 'True religion,' said a High Court judge to Horace, 'is not a matter of labels, but of consecrated service to one's fellows. This judge and others, disregarding their Hindu or Muslim 'labels', joined him at their own request in a Quaker-like time of worship.

When Horace returned to Britain the first Round Table Conference had begun. The Congress was not represented, but among the Indian members were 'men of true religion' honoured by their fellow-countrymen: Tej Bahadur Sapru, V. Srinivasa Sastri, K. T. Paul. They worked hard for decisions which would be acceptable to the Congress, and equally hard to explain the purpose of the Conference to the British public. Friends helped; hundreds of them attended a special Quaker conference in November at which Sastri, Paul, and Shoran Singha all spoke. By the time the Round Table Conference ended in December the Indians were convinced that the British government really meant business. The Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald publicly voiced his hope that the Indian National Congress would take part in a second conference the following year.

Lord Irwin therefore released his political prisoners **unconditionally** – on the anniversary of Independence Day in January 1931! Then came long personal talks between him and Gandhi; these two 'men of true religion' found that they could trust one another, and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact opened a way.

When Tagore spoke in Friends House in May 1930 his links with the Society of Friends had already become closer. As a result of Horace's visit

to him in 1927 it had been agreed that Nalin Ganguly, with Friends' support, should join the Viswa-Bharati staff; he became Principal of the college department in 1928. During the following year 1929 two American Friends were recruited for work in Sriniketan.

For Harry Garland Timbres and his wife Rebecca this was a totally unexpected adventure. Harry had joined Friends during the First World War, when he was a university student; in 1920 he volunteered for relief work in war-devastated Europe, and the AFSC sent him to Poland. Rebecca Janney, the daughter of a well-known Quaker doctor, had also volunteered, and after training in nursing she too was sent to Poland. In 1921 they met in Warsaw, and were married there in March 1922. Then they were sent to a famine-stricken part of Russia, where they learned to respect and admire the Russian people and to enjoy their stories and folk dances.

This experience led Harry to decide to become a doctor. During the years of study which followed, the Timbres' little girls were born and cared for, and in 1928-29 the AFSC made a plan to send the family back to Russia; they were to live at Tolstoy's former home, Yasnaya Polyana, to train Russians as male health workers and women nurses. All was ready, visas secured, boxes packed; before sailing, they visited friends in Chicago.

Suddenly there came a telegram, from Clarence Pickett of the AFSC 'Russian visas revoked; see Dr Andrews', and naming the Chicago church where 'Dr Andrews' was to be found. The name meant nothing to the Timbres, but they went to the service. 'How shabby he looks!' thought Rebecca, but when C. F. Andrews began to speak of Tagore and Viswa-Bharati she listened spellbound – for Tagore's name was familiar. She had once visited London with her parents, in 1913, and seen a performance of Tagore's play *The Post Office*. Later she had discovered and treasured *Gitanjali*, and she and Harry had read it together during their courtship. They talked with Andrews, who told them that Tagore needed a doctor and a nurse for Sriniketan, to develop public health work and build up **Health Cooperatives. Here was a fascinating alternative to Russia!**

The first step was to consult Leonard Elmhirst, and by September 1929, with the support of the AFSC, the family had sailed for England to do so. Leonard advised Harry to go to India alone in the first place and see the situation for himself. An English member of the former Friends Relief Service in Warsaw was in Birmingham, and suggested that during Harry's absence Rebecca and the children should stay in the Missionary Guest House not far from Woodbrooke.

In Santiniketan Harry talked at length with Tagore and others, made a beginning on Bengali, and began to plan a possible hospital. He also attended the Congress meeting in Lahore (though there is no evidence that he met Reg Reynolds in the crowd) and was invited to Chhatarpur

by the new doctor there, Ruth Hull. Returning to England full of enthusiasm, he took a course in tropical diseases in London, leaving Rebecca still in the Guest House in Birmingham.

Rebecca met Tagore when he visited Woodbrooke in the spring of 1930, and he greeted her warmly for Harry's sake. Harry was then 30, Tagore nearly 70, but they were on the same terms of easy equality as Tagore had been with Elmhirst. Later that year he asked Harry to go with him to Russia, and then to the United States, just as he had earlier got Elmhirst to accompany him to South America. Meanwhile Rebecca in Birmingham found life rewarding. Horace and Olive Alexander were 'like family', for Olive's father, J. W. Graham, knew her own father well; Jack and Jessie Hoyland were there with their knowledge of India, and Henry T. Hodgkin, who had just been helping to start 'Pendle Hill' in Pennsylvania as an American counterpart of Woodbrooke. She herself was in great demand for Russian dances and stories, and American 'spirituals'.

Early in 1931 Rebecca joined Harry in the States for a 'whirl' of committees and consultations (Dorothy Elmhirst paying for her journey). Then she and Harry returned to Britain, where they joined Housman, Andrews, Elmhirst and others in founding a Tagore Association. Finally they spent a month (on Leonard Elmhirst's advice and at Dorothy's expense) in studying pioneer medical cooperatives in Yugoslavia. And so at last they landed at Bombay, and travelled eastward across India. They visited Gail and Ratcliffe Addison, the rural doctor and the farmer, at Itarsi: they visited Elmhirst's friend and guide Sam Higginbottom at Naini, and then they settled into Sriniketan.

During the years that followed hard work was happily combined with youthful fun, in which Tagore himself joined with as much zest as did the Timbres' little girls, while their Russian folk-dancing added to the community's enjoyment. Their chief medical interest was to prevent sickness rather than cure it, and Harry soon became aware of the toll exacted by constantly recurring malaria, sapping energy and undermining health. He undertook a thorough survey of the incidence of malaria in the region, thus providing the factual basis for programmes of control. His critical objective study was a major contribution to the welfare of West Bengal.

At the same time he and Rebecca were working out how to apply the knowledge of Health Cooperatives which they had gained in Yugoslavia to the conditions of village life around Surul. Their plans worked, and the cooperatives made a good start, helped on by the intelligent cooperation of the village children in the Sriniketan school which Elmhirst had founded. They kept in friendly touch with the Addisons in Itarsi, and not many years later Friends from Itarsi were visiting Sriniketan to study the Health Cooperative there.

Tagore was delighted with it all. Harry was impressed by his reminder to students that 'this place (Santiniketan) is meant for those who will give their best, forgetting themselves.'<sup>12</sup> The Timbres did just that, but three years of giving his best in the difficult climate of Bengal played havoc with Harry's own health. In 1934 he became a very sick man, and the family was obliged to withdraw. Two years later, when his health was restored, the way opened for them to return to Russia, to that region of their first love, the forests of the Volga. They were made welcome, and once more they gave their best; but less than a year later, in 1937, Harry died there of typhus, in his 38th year.

The contribution made by Nalin Ganguly during the same period is much more difficult to assess. Some of the difficulty stems from his own character and circumstances. He was excitable, and easily swayed by those he admired. One of the many Bengali Brahmins who staffed the High Schools of central India, he had joined Friends in Hoshangabad when he was working with Jack Hoyland there, but he did not stay long enough to feel part of the group in mid-India. He went back to Calcutta and helped Joseph and Katherine Taylor when they arrived, but left after a short time for study in England. When he returned two years or more later he worked for the YMCA, but the attitude of some of its officers to his 'unbaptised' condition was a constant irritant. He fell into the habit, understandable but unfortunate, of being continually on the defensive.

Ganguly was a strong advocate of the principle of co-education, and in applying it to the college department at Santiniketan he had the backing of Tagore. During his first two years the college was 'too successful', in that it attracted too many students for the Calcutta University degree which was offered as an alternative to the Viswa-Bharati diploma. The balance was upset, and Tagore was troubled, but before he and Ganguly could take steps to put it right he left for his prolonged 1930 absence in Europe and the United States. From then on Ganguly's surviving letters to Friends House in London are full of references to factions and 'vested interests' which were working against him. In 1931 there was a crisis connected with the co-educational principles of the College, and Ganguly sent in his resignation. Then, the poet came to the rescue with his great heart and vision and the resignation was withdrawn. 'He is the only man in Santiniketan,' wrote Ganguly admiringly, 'who has the courage to own a mistake.'<sup>13</sup> For a time things were happier, but before the end of 1932 some whom Tagore trusted were making things difficult for Ganguly, whose own rather prickly defensiveness made him an easy target. In 1933 he finally withdrew, and returned to his own Calcutta home, where his Brahmin family had long accepted him.



### Notes to Chapter XVIII

- 1 This unnamed helper was succeeded, not long afterwards, by the agricultural economist Dr Amir Ali, who as a little boy on the streets of Hyderabad had once enjoyed Philip Sturge's jokes (see chap.9, above).
- 2 For details of the life of Muriel Lester see the biography *Mother of World Peace*, 1993, by Jill Wallis.
- 3 For J.G.Alexander's work in India see Horace Alexander's biography of his father, chap.4.
- 4 The meeting was held in the hall of the Women's Christian College, whose students were permitted to listen from the gallery. They wrote a vivid account in the college magazine.
- 5 A Parliamentary Commission could formally include only Members of Parliament, but there was no attempt to circumvent the limitation.
- 6 Willie Pearson had died in 1923, being fatally injured in a railway accident in Italy.
- 7 The title of a short book (1928) describing his experience on that visit to India.
- 8 The *Christa Seva Sangha* (Society for Service of Christ) was founded and led by Jack Winslow; its members took Indian names.
- 9 Quotations are from Horace Alexander's book *The Indian Ferment*, which describes his experience during this visit, especially pp.228-9 and 236.
- 10 Phrase used by Nirad Chaudhuri, who in general was critical of Gandhi. See *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*, 1987, p.275.
- 11 Gospel according to St Luke 22.52.
- 12 The words are reported by Harry Timbres himself.
- 13 Nalin Ganguly's letters to H.Catford dated September 1931 are preserved in Friends House Library, London.

### CHAPTER XIX

## Indian Politics : 1931 to 1935

*Governments, like clocks, go by the motion men give them.*

WILLIAM PENN

THE GANDI-IRWIN PACT ended civil disobediences, and Gandhi prepared to represent the Congress when the next conference opened in September 1931. In England Andrews too prepared; he wrote a series of books about Gandhi designed to introduce him and his ideas to the British public.

Nevertheless Gandhi hesitated. The spring of 1931 had brought political changes. In England the Labour government was replaced by a coalition less friendly to India's aspirations, though Ramsay Macdonald and Lord Sankey the chairman of the Round Table Conference were still part of it. In India Lord Irwin was replaced by Lord Willingdon who was less ready to listen to 'unofficial' voices, whether Indian or British. Mutual suspicions raised their heads again, hopes of 'freedom in cooperation' were dimmed. But for Gandhi that was only part of the problem, there was something deeper. He believed that before the conference met Hindus and Muslims should unite to claim the substance of self government, and he urged his fellow-Hindus to make this possible by listening to Muslim wishes and allaying their fears. He did not succeed, but in the end he decided to attend the conference.

Gandhi was welcomed to London in a public meeting at Friends House, organised jointly with Indians in London and with Laurence Housman and Fenner Brockway. Gandhi said that he felt in unity with Friends in 'the common cause of peace'.

I expect Quakers [he said] to represent the Indian cause – and this will mean *study*, thorough *study*, followed by corporate action based on *truth*. That is what *satyagraha* means – insistence on *truth*.

He told them that he had found that spirit in a book which many Friends before him had treasured, *The Imitation of Christ*.<sup>1</sup>

During the period of the Round Table Conference regular mid-week Meetings for Worship were held in Friends House. Gandhi attended the first, with Lord Sankey and others. It was completely silent, and so deep and powerful that Gandhi was eager to attend subsequent Meetings and did so whenever he could. The Woodbrooke Council released Horace Alexander to assist Gandhi at his London office near the conference site,<sup>2</sup> where along with Andrews and Reg Reynolds he did his best to shield Gandhi from the idly curious; sometimes he accompanied Gandhi on the long drive back to Kingsley Hall, where he was staying with Muriel Lester among the poor of Bow. Friends also helped Andrews to arrange for Gandhi to spend weekends out of London in order to meet people in the Universities and the Church, as well as the unemployed workers of the cotton mills of Lancashire, where he stayed in the home of a Quaker mill owner. There was a memorable weekend at Woodbrooke, during which Gandhi talked long with the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr Barnes.<sup>3</sup> Happily there were also one or two weekends of pure relaxation with Muriel Lester's friends in the quiet of the English countryside.

At the conference itself things did not go well. Gandhi's was often a lonely voice; he had little support except from S. K. Datta who had taken K. T. Paul's place.<sup>3a</sup> The rival interests did not agree about vital matters, which were left to the decision of the British government. When the conference ended in December, Gandhi had seemingly been able to accomplish nothing. Before he left he met his Quaker friends once more in Carl Heath's room at Friends House. There would continue to be a need, he said, for someone to present the Indian point of view, clearly and truthfully, to the British government and people. Could not Horace do it? Horace did not feel that he could, but Agatha Harrison, who had been an assistant to the Whitley Commission's inquiry into industrial labour in India, agreed to undertake the work with modest financial support found in India. This was the seedbed of the India Conciliation Group which began its work in 1932 and in which Friends worked alongside other friends of India.

This network of goodwill was not confined to Britain. Both Gandhi and Tagore found a response also on the continent of Europe where Tagore had travelled widely. In December 1931 on his way back to India Gandhi went to Switzerland to meet that great advocate of 'a larger humanity', Romain Rolland. A few days later a Swiss Quaker couple, Edmond and Yvonne Privat, joined him and travelled with him to India. They did not stay there long, but for many years afterwards they kept the issues of 'truth and nonviolence' before the French-speaking world in the pages of their



Marjorie Sykes and Mary Barr in 1968.

magazine *L'Essor*, a kind of independent counterpart of the Indian *Guardian*.

That voyage to India in December 1931 was significant for a number of people and had its impact upon Friends other than the Privats. There was a young Maratha passenger named Shyamrao Hivale. He had become Verrier Elwin's close friend at the ashram at Pune, and then had gone to England for theological studies. Elwin himself, after three or four years' 'apprenticeship' in the ashram, had decided that the time had come for independent work, and wrote to invite Hivale to join him, and Hivale broke off his studies and came, by the same ship as Gandhi. Before the end of 1932 he and Elwin, at the suggestion of Gandhi's friend Jamnalal Bajaj, had set up a simple ashram of service among the Gond people at Karanji in the Maikal Range, at the far eastern extremity of the Satpura hills.

Another passenger was Mary Barr, who had been working as a missionary in Hyderabad State since 1920. When she heard of Gandhi during her first years in India she had thought him 'a fanatical extremist'. During 1931 she had been on leave in England and had read Andrews' books

about him, and they had so impressed her that she decided that when she got back to India she would study his movement seriously. Then unexpectedly she found Gandhi himself on board the ship on which she travelled, and when they reached Bombay he invited her to his own headquarters in Laburnum Road. There she met Anna Maria Petersen, the Dane whose girls' school in South India had been inspired by Gandhi; there too for the first time in her life she ate an Indian meal served in Indian style. She decided to throw in her lot with Gandhi 'to serve the India that he is trying to save'. She went back to Hyderabad to send in her resignation to the mission, although she did not leave until, later in 1932, a replacement had been found.

Gandhi himself, when he reached Bombay, was confronted by disturbing news: Jawaharlal Nehru and others of his fellow-workers were again in jail. Once more trouble had arisen over the land-tax; there had been an increase whose justice was disputed. The Congress leaders had begun to negotiate with the government on the peasants' behalf but instead of suspending collection until the matter was settled, local officials had demanded payment at the disputed rate. The peasants refused to comply, and their leaders were under arrest. It was not long before Gandhi himself was arrested as a potential disturber of the peace.

There was widespread bitterness in India; it seemed that the incipient belief in British sincerity had after all been misplaced. In England the Friends were much distressed; they recorded their hope that 'we may as a Society, and through individual Friends, take our full share in the service of progress through reconciliation'. The first to act were three individual Friends, Percy Bartlett and Eric Hayman of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Hilda Cashmore who had lived among the poor for many years in the slums of Bristol and Manchester. They left for India at the end of January 1932, and there sought the help of Tagore who like them longed to see 'generosity of spirit' shown on both sides.

They found hysteria in the air. Unlike Horace Alexander in 1930, they were not allowed to visit Gandhi in jail. Westerners who showed sympathy with India's desire for freedom were under suspicion; Gordon Halstead, a graduate of the Friends College at Haverford PA, had been asked to resign from his college post in Lucknow; Christopher Ackroyd in Calcutta was harassed by the European Association for similar reasons; Dr Forrester Paton, co-founder with an Indian friend of a Christian ashram, who wore the homespun cotton 'livery of freedom', was struck by the batons of the police as they dispersed a peaceful crowd in Madras. Percy Bartlett sadly recorded his impression that the government wanted 'victory more than peace'.

When the three travellers returned to Britain there was much to be done. Even within the Society of Friends too little heed had been given to Gandhi's appeal for 'study, thorough *study*'. Quaker reactions to the freedom movement ranged from unrealistic enthusiasm to unreasoning suspicion; the vision so widely shared in 1930 had begun to fade. Even Percy Whitlock in India, who had so well understood his students' reactions to the boycott of 1920 and the death of Lajpat Rai in 1928, failed to understand why, steeped in Bengali political tradition as they were, they had not responded to Gandhi's call in 1930.<sup>4</sup> The India Conciliation Group set to work, with Agatha Harrison as honorary secretary and Henry Polak, Gandhi's old friend from South Africa, a valuable member. One useful channel of communication with India was *The Guardian*, which had been transferred from Calcutta to Madras early in 1932. Its value as an independent commentary on public affairs was recognised both in India and in Britain. The Quaker Trust which backed it included along with Horace Alexander some of the wisest of those who had once worked for Friends in Hoshangabad – Basil Backhouse, Douglas Maynard, 'Uncle' Alfred Smith.

Then came the dramatic events of the autumn of 1932. Gandhi had warned the Round Table Conference that he would 'resist with his life' any political plan which would perpetuate the shameful status of 'untouchable'. The British government's 'communal award' gave these 'scheduled castes' separate electoral representation, and he believed that this in effect endorsed the wrong. Prisoner as he was, he announced a 'fast unto death' against the award. An alternative plan, acceptable to 'untouchables' and 'higher-caste' Hindus alike, was the only thing to save his life. Strenuous efforts made by Tagore and others in India and by Andrews in England enabled agreement to be reached. Gandhi broke his fast and was released, to devote all his energies over the next few years to the welfare of those whom he re-named *Harijan*, 'the people of God'.<sup>5</sup>

The work of the India Conciliation Group went on. Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, who had issued a prompt and generous apology for the treatment of Forrester Paton by the police, listened courteously and carefully to the Friends who visited him, though his own power was limited by the fact that any reform had to win the support of an unsympathetic Parliament.

In January 1934 a serious earthquake occurred in Bihar, and emergency action on a large scale became necessary. The Indian National Congress raised a relief fund; the chairman of the committee which administered it was the distinguished Bihari Dr Rajendra Prasad, the chief executive was J. C. Kumarappa, secretary of the All India Village

Industry Association. Both men were known to be of the highest integrity, so that an accusation in a government report that the AIVIA was a political set-up and was misusing the relief fund naturally caused much ill-feeling. Then came an independent body, known in England as the International Voluntary Service for Peace (IVSP), which ever since the First World War had been getting young men and women of formerly enemy nations to join together in direct personal service through manual labour for sufferers from warfare or other disaster. The Swiss founder, Pierre Ceresole, now led a team to Bihar. Government and Congress both alike welcomed and supported them; Rajendra Prasad appealed for Indian volunteers to help them. The work attracted Quakers: Jack Hoyland's younger brother William Frazer Hoyland<sup>6</sup> was a member of the team, and Jack himself followed its work with the deepest interest.

Meanwhile a new Government of India Act, based upon the work of the Round Table Conferences, was being drafted by Samuel Hoare and his associates at the India Office. In view of the failure of the major communities, Hindu and Muslim, to agree on a common plan, it embodied a pattern of separate 'communal electorates', and offered no opportunity to Indians to modify the pattern later by mutual consent.

It means [wrote Andrews prophetically] a cat-and-dog fight between Muslims and Hindus . . . extremists on both sides would be elected and try to stir things up.<sup>7</sup>

Hoare replied sadly that he could do no more; the Act became law in 1935.

In the summer of that year came another disastrous earthquake which struck the city of Quetta in the extreme northwest.<sup>8</sup> Unlike remote and rural Bihar, Quetta was an important government civil and military centre. The published reports were blatantly racist, in that they contained information about every British resident known and practically none about the fate of Indian inhabitants. To make things worse, Gandhi was refused entry to the stricken city. There was no IVSP team as in Bihar to work alongside the common folk as 'brothers' to reclaim their devastated homes and lands. England had failed once more to touch India's heart.

## Notes to Chapter XIX

1 See *The Friend*, 1931, p.1150. *The Imitation of Christ* continues to 'speak to the condition' both of Friends and of Indian devotees.

2 The office was at 88 Knightsbridge (the building was later destroyed in an air raid). Horace wrote a lively account of experiences there for the Woodbrooke 'Log'.

3 E.W.Barnes (1874-1953) was well known for his emphasis on personal commitment and integrity and his indifference to ritual. 'I'm not sure whether I agree with him,' said one of his young clergy, 'but I know he's a saint.' One of the Stevenson family, Muriel Lester's friends, who had lived many years in India, was also looked upon as a 'saint', and Muriel arranged for Gandhi to spend an unpublicised week-end in their family home at Gerrards Cross in the Chiltern Hills. The visit is unrecorded (being politically unimportant?) but is clearly remembered still (1993) by an old inhabitant who was a young man at the time.

3a K.T.Paul died a few weeks after the Quaker conference in November 1930. Horace Alexander described him as a 'faithful architect' of Indian freedom (*Gandhi Through Western Eyes*, Philadelphia 1984, p.67).

4 Letter to *The Friend*, 24th June 1932, p.560.

5 The thought of God as Friend of the lowly and Helper of the helpless is voiced in many of the India hymns referred to in chap.1, above.

6 William Frazer Hoyland was the son of Josephine Taylor who had worked as a nurse in Hoshangabad 1901-5 and became John William Hoyland's second wife in 1906.

7 B.Chaturvedi and M.Sykes, *Charles Freer Andrews*, 1949, p.280.

8 The whole stretch of the Himalayan foothills from east to west is geologically unstable and earthquake-prone.

## CHAPTER XX

## A Vision to Pursue : 1934 to 1937

*To hold together faith and works, the sense of adoration and the obligation of service, is an essential and practicable task.*

CHARLES E. RAVEN<sup>1</sup>

WHEN HILDA CASHMORE joined Percy Bartlett and Eric Hayman on the visit to India in 1932, she was 56 years old. Going up to Oxford at 23,<sup>2</sup> an exceptionally mature student, she had read modern history and then spent some years in teaching, first in the Derbyshire town of Chesterfield, and then in Bristol, where she joined Friends. All through these years she had been haunted by the contrast between the open spaces and natural beauty which had surrounded her own childhood, and the mean cramped dreariness of the town slums. Her indignation had led her first to try to stir up a puzzled Chesterfield, and then to envisage, create and direct the Bristol University Settlement, from which eventually she moved on to Manchester to revitalise the almost derelict University Settlement there; while at Manchester she took a short leave in 1932 for the visit to India.

Hilda had taken leave from Bristol much earlier, in order to share in Friends' relief service in France and in Poland during and after the First World War. And whether at home or abroad her interests were in the people she met, the individual men, women and children with their varied gifts, struggles and potentialities. No one was ever just 'a case'. It is not surprising that she should be described as 'a born nurse' – but she was a nurse with powerful intellectual interests besides practical skills.

While in India in 1932 Hilda found time to visit Friends in the Hoshangabad District, and saw the Rasulia compound, unused by Friends since the Industrial Works were closed in 1918. A trusted teacher, Matthew Robert, was living in the former office building and acting as a general overseer. Other buildings had been rented to local people who had originally come to escape from visitations of plague in the town; two

families, a Goan railway official and a local lawyer, Mr Chatterji, divided the bungalow between them, and the Headmaster of the Government High School occupied the Meeting House. But the whole place looked shabby and neglected; the only liveliness was in the children who, 'venerable old lady' as they thought her, quickly became Hilda's friends.

When the three observers returned to England Hilda continued to pursue her own thoughts. She was convinced that 'a real partnership between England and India is of the utmost importance for the true development of India's task of self-government',<sup>3</sup> and that Friends had a duty to contribute to such a partnership. Might they not provide, she asked herself, 'a place to which young educated Indians and English, from

different parts, may come for study, meditation, thinking together about the main social problems'? She also read T. Edmund Harvey's book *A Wayfarer's Faith*, in which he proposed that every human community should have 'a House of peace and prayer', whose members would undertake 'both trained spiritual and intellectual effort and personal service with their hands. In India, would not such a House fit India's ancient concept of an *ashram*?<sup>4</sup> Could there be a Quaker *ashram* in the Hoshangabad District, linked to the Quaker past there yet offering something new?

These two ideas, for a partnership in reflection, and for a House of peace and prayer, interacted with one another in Hilda's mind. In the terms with which she was familiar they suggested a 'settlement', not one like Bristol but one 'on the Woodbrooke model'. The need had been seen for years; Jack Hoyland had talked of an 'Indian Woodbrooke' in 1925, and two or three years later Horace Alexander and Amy Montford had pointed to the need for Indian Friends to be 'in touch with the best life and thought of their own country'. But nothing had been done, and Hilda felt that the time had come for action.

During 1933, the matter had to wait, for Hilda herself had much ill-health. Early in 1934 however she went to C. F. Andrews, who was then a Fellow at Woodbrooke. His spiritual autobiography *What I Owe to Christ*



Hilda Cashmore.

had been well received, and he was writing another book of testimony, *Christ in the Silence*.

No one mind [wrote Hilda later] was more responsible than Andrews for the original shaping of the little Friends' Ashram – it was as though he had foreseen the very situation.

He advised that it should be accessible, not too far from a railway station, and near a road. She decided to look for a site somewhere near Itarsi which would fulfil these conditions.

That year 1934 brought changes among Friends in the Itarsi area. In the spring Roland Priestman was once more due for furlough. Friendly and attractive as he was in many ways (he and Elsie befriended the prisoners in Hoshangabad jail in truly Quakerly fashion) he had always been something of an *enfant terrible*.<sup>5</sup> Like Esther Baird in Nowgong he was a good builder, but (like her) he did not get on easily with those who disagreed with him. Things became so difficult that his colleagues told the London committee that he should not return unless he could overcome 'his strong spirit of self-assertion'.

Meanwhile came the welcome news that doctors had been found for the hospital. They were a newly-married couple, William (Bill) and Molly Tandy, who had come to Friends through the Student Christian Movement, and had been married at Friends House early in the year. Bill had had some years' experience, Molly was more recently qualified. They reached Itarsi in October 1934, but Gail Addison agreed to carry on the hospital until the spring of 1935, so that they might have time for language study and for visits to other hospitals.

At the beginning of November came Hilda Cashmore, with Dorothy Hersey as her companion. After returning from her work in Madras Dorothy had spent part of 1932 in Woodbrooke and there met her future husband John Turtle. By 1934 John was working in the Friends School at Brummana in Lebanon, and Dorothy came to help Hilda for a few months before going to Brummana to be married. They arrived in time for Mid-India Yearly Meeting, and Indian Friends listened with interest as Geoffrey Maw introduced them and explained what Hilda was hoping to do. Yes, the Meeting said, an ashram settlement would be 'a source of strength'; but it would take time, whatever site was decided, to get hold of the land, and meanwhile she would be welcome to take the Rasulia compound for a year and begin her work from there. With Geoffrey Maw's help Hilda bought 'a hearty old motor car named Prudence' in which, during the first weeks, she and Dorothy went about the district getting to know their colleagues and their surroundings.

They quickly pinpointed two possible sites for the ashram. One was Makoriya, linked as it was with the Quaker past, the other a tiny place called Jamai in the forest south of Itarsi, beneath 'Itarsi Peak'. Heinz von Tucher was then in Makoriya. For about four years he had represented the FFMA Trust, which owned the village, as its *lambardar* or headman; he collected the land-cess, gave loans to farmers at his discretion, settled disputes. His family background made this authority natural to him, and he used it to good purpose. He built a series of small dams on the local stream, which controlled floodwater and provided irrigation. But being human he sometimes made mistakes, and when his Indian colleagues felt he had acted harshly or unwisely, they were unable to argue the point as equals because he was 'the boss'. Hilda Cashmore, seeing the situation, soon decided that for her 'Jamai would be better than Makoriya'. But the Mid-India Friends were right, the formalities of purchase took a full year to complete.

Meanwhile there had come an unexpected blow. When Bill Tandy arrived he at once noticed Geoffrey Maw's painful limp, and insisted on a proper check-up. This was done in Bhopal, and the verdict was that Geoffrey should go to England at once for expert treatment. The Maws left, speeded affectionately on their way by 'most of the population of Itarsi'. They were greatly missed, not least by Hilda who knew how much Geoffrey might have been able to guide her. Mary Allen also was about to leave; after nearly 10 years of wise and acceptable service she had reached the age of retirement, but before leaving India she spent time in Nagpur with her American friend Irene Bose,<sup>6</sup> who cared as much as she did for the welfare of the poor. Through Mary, Hilda also got to know and value Irene.

At the very end of the year Hilda and Dorothy travelled to Karachi to attend the annual meeting of the All-India Women's Conference, where outstanding Indian women came together from every part of the country and from every religious group – Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsee, Sikh. A leading figure was Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, destined to be the first Minister of Health in independent India. Hilda herself took an active part, she read a paper on George Fox and his attitude to women.

Back in the Hoshangabad District after these two crowded months, Hilda and Dorothy settled in Rasulia early in January 1935. They made their home in the little house near the south gate where formerly the clerk of the Industrial Works had lived. People at once took notice: here were foreigners who did not want a 'bungalow'! The compound looked much as it had done in 1932, and seemed more depressing than ever. Nothing could be done about a 'settlement' until the main buildings had been vacated; Hilda made friends with the tenants, told them of her plans, and



asked them to find other accommodation during the approaching hot weather. Her personal warmth and understanding was such that they not only did so, but that Shyamsunder Lal the High School Headmaster, Chatterji the Bengali lawyer and their families continued to be her close friends.

During most of that February Hilda was living alone; Dorothy had fallen ill, and spent the month recuperating in Madras with her old friends the Danns. But Hilda had her motor car 'Prudence'; she visited the Itarsi hospital and made friends with the Addison family, especially with the Addisons' 12-year-old son Thomas,<sup>7</sup> and with an Indian boy of the same age. She was impressed too by Edith Bevan's care for her Indian nurses. Most of them were Christian girls from the Sohagpur school; they knew no English, so Edith had got the current nursing text books translated into Hindi for them and earned their delighted gratitude. There were other Christian hospitals at Nagpur to the south and Nimach to the north, and all their nurses, as Edith believed, needed something more than knowledge, they needed vision. She therefore arranged conferences at Itarsi, the central place, where a vision of their profession as a vocation, divine call, was laid before them.

The conscientious hard-working Edith deserved a treat, decided Hilda, and one day carried her off in 'Prudence' to the river confluence at Bandrabhan to play in the water with Hilda's little dog Patrick. Then at the end of the month Dorothy Hersey returned, but for her Hilda was not such an easy companion. '*you* tell me not to think so much,' she wrote ruefully to her fiancé, 'but Hilda wants me to think all the time!' They lived together at very close quarters, and Dorothy was often irritated by Hilda's sprawling untidiness. It speaks well for both women however that they regularly spent a morning time of quiet together and so found healing of the spirit.

Then Dorothy left India to be married, and Hilda took refuge from the increasing heat of Rasulia at YWCA conferences in the cool Nilgiri Hills, passing through Madras and meeting the Friends there on her way. At the conferences she listened to young Indian women who lamented the western emphasis on organisation and longed for a more relaxed personal approach. Over 50 years earlier the same issue had distinguished Samuel Baker's organised mission from Charles Gayford's leisured ways. In the Nilgiri Hills Hilda also met the Macleans from Bombay, and on her way back to Hoshangabad she travelled through Mysore and Bangalore, where she renewed the links she had made at Karachi with Indian women from that area. An all-India network of friendship was begun.

In Rasulia the rains of July had brought relief from heat and Hilda set to work to prepare the vacated buildings for their future use. She soon began to feel that although she had been given the use of the compound as a temporary measure, 'it might be worth keeping'. Buildings were there and could be used – the one-time office of the Works as the library, the bungalow and workshop for house conferences and other guests, the Meeting House as once more a place of prayer. And there were not only buildings, there were also people, 'an intelligently literate group', who lived in the cottages which had once housed the apprentices of the Works. There was Kampta Prasad, now a semi-invalid, with his musical gifts, and Gauriyaba, 'a sweet young teacher fully trained'. Hilda's own driver was an educated young man. Among other helpers were the Tandys' cook and his family; the Tandys had had to return to England when Bill was found to have polio; it was successfully treated, but they were away about six months. Then there was a waterman-gardener from Khera, and an ayah named Binyabai.

Binyabai had a little girl named Sumati, who some years earlier had been adopted at birth by Mary Allen. Mary had retired and left India earlier that year, and had given Sumati to Binyabai so that she might grow up naturally among her own people. She was a friendly little soul, and accustomed as she had been to a white 'mother', she had at first sight put her arms around Hilda in a way that Hilda could not resist. So she and Binyabai joined the group, and Binyabai ran a simple dispensary and turned her skilful hands to many other tasks. Soon afterwards came another young English companion to take Dorothy Hersey's place, Ermytrude Malet, gay, adaptable, variously gifted, a skilled nurse with a lovely singing voice.

The group pooled their gifts and resources and set to work. Buildings were scrubbed clean and given new coats of paint and whitewash; gardens began to grow; ingenious bazaar artisans fashioned curtain hooks, watering cans and much else from odd bits of wire and scrap. Special attention was given to the beautifully proportioned Meeting House. The western half, looking out across the river valley to the Vindhya Hills, was curtained off as the Quiet Room with long curtains of soft dark blue; the eastern half, with its fireplace and wall-cupboards, formed the entrance lobby. Orioles sang round it by day, fireflies danced by night. When it was ready, Kampta Prasad would sit there of an evening, singing from time to time his devotional songs, and Hilda rejoiced to see how naturally people were attracted to worship.

Then there was the library. In 1934, before Hilda left England, she and her friend Katherine Lloyd had made a careful selection of books, including a good collection of source books on Christian mysticism, but

she had not attempted to bring the books to India until the situation was clearer. Now in October 1935 they arrived, brought by Roland and Elsie Priestman (who had been allowed to return to India after all). It was just the right time, the building was ready, the Ashram activities were about to begin. Within a few weeks there was a 'Library Society' attracting educated people from the town and organising talks and discussions.

Hilda had meanwhile invited the Mid-India Yearly Meeting, which had made it possible for her to use Rasulia, to hold its 1935 session in the refurbished compound. When it met the 'trial year' was drawing to a close, and everyone was eager that the work should continue. Soon afterwards came the first 'outside' guests, students from Hislop College, Nagpur, led by Professor D. G. Moses. As the first Indian Principal of the College he was a 'friend of Friends' for many years.

In December 1935 some of those who had been absent in England came back. The Tandys returned, and Geoffrey Maw, though Mildred remained in England with their children. 'What a change!' wrote Geoffrey when he saw what had been done. 'Rasulia is transformed beyond belief. Between Rasulia and Jamai, all Friends' concerns might be expressed.' For despite all the activity in Rasulia, Jamai had not been forgotten. Back in July, during the rains, Hilda had gone with Henry Robson to see the hoped-for site, and found it well-drained and in good shape. A local well-wisher, Rudra Lodha<sup>8</sup> of Bagra village, had given her money to buy the land, she had the friendly interest of the District Collector, and step by step the owners of the site were persuaded to part with about 10 acres for a reasonable sum. At the beginning of January 1936 the sale was completed and registered.

1935 ended in a happy Christmas party, to which Hilda and Ermyn welcomed guests from many places. Harold Loukes, who had joined Friends in Oxford two years earlier, came from St Stephen's College, Delhi; Verrier Elwin came from his ashram at Karanjia near the source of the Narmada, Elizabeth Booth from Santiniketan, Frederic and Laura Gravely from Madras. From Punjab came Ranjit Chetsingh, who 'helped very much'. On Christmas Eve Shyamsunder Lal (the Hoshangabad Headmaster) and his wife sent a delicious meal for the whole party, and later they had all gathered in the Meeting House for Christmas midnight worship.

1936 was a year of achievement, when all the hard work of the previous 12 months began to show results. During the first part of the year Hilda and Ermyn concentrated on Jamai. The first need was a water supply, and in February with customary local ceremony, the first sod was cut for a well. Ermyn sketched plans for very simple housing, which was then built by the local Gond people themselves, using almost wholly local

material, and with traditional Gond wood-carving in a little Quiet Room. The only inputs from outside were the corrugated iron sheets which lined the roofs, and were covered with tiles or thatch, waterproof and cool. Roland Priestman happily helped in the building.

Within easy reach of the Jamai site were three little Gond villages, Jamai, Nagpur and Pondikheri. Near Nagpur there was clay, and a brickworks which employed many of the people, who needed the kind of simple medical service which the ashram there could offer. Hilda explored the possibilities through her network of local contacts. Among these was a young Hoshangabad Brahmin studying for BA, who came to her in Rasulia for coaching in English. This boy had a friend, a member of the family which owned the brickworks, who had studied at Indore Christian College and imbibed its ideals of service. Through him the interest of the family was won; there was medical help for the brickyard workers all through the unhealthy rainy season. In the autumn Mary Allen came back to help as an independent worker, and in December the Provincial Red Cross appointed a health visitor who was a native of the District.

She is a great success [wrote Hilda]. She harangues the women with humour and rhetoric in a hearty Indian village voice. (Don't talk to me of India's dumb millions, they don't exist!) She and Mary Allen do very good health teaching.

The owners of the brick works decided to provide a clinic building, which was ceremonially opened in February 1937 by an old friend of Hilda's, Lady Bhore, who with her husband had befriended the three Quaker visitors to Delhi in 1932. They were now stationed nearer, in Bhopal State.

When the hot weather of 1936 began Ermyntrude Malet returned home, and Hilda again spent the summer with the YWCA, this time at Naini Tal in the Himalayan foothills. Stanley Jones, who had long been associated with Friends in supporting the Calcutta *Guardian*, had his summer centre at Seit Tal not far away, and Hilda visited him there. In his other base at Sitapur he was in touch with Friends in the Lucknow area, Sucha and Veida Khera and Charles Revis. Sucha was making a fine Quaker witness as a District Collector, doing his utmost to help discharge prisoners to start life afresh, while he firmly used his authority to ensure that owners of sugar factories paid a fair price, cash down, to the farmers from whom they bought their cane. Charles Revis, on the staff of the Lucknow Christian College, had joined Friends while in England in 1935. He felt as happily at home in India as James Strachan in Nagpur: his 'excellent' reports from Lucknow were shared with Friends.

Now that the Rasulia buildings were in good order it was possible to have meetings there even during the rains. Students were not free to come then, so Hilda concentrated on helping local Friends to widen their

horizons. She invited a missionary named Donald McGavran,<sup>9</sup> who had recently conducted a survey of the 'mass movements' into the Christian church which were taking place in various parts of India. Many of his hearers, missionary and Indian alike, were moved by his account of these happenings; apart from Hilda herself hardly anyone realised that in view of the 'communal' electorates embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935, 'conversion' on such a large scale from one religious community to another was bound to be a sensitive political issue. The meeting with McGavran at least opened the matter for discussion.

A second gathering discussed Christian education, something in which Friends had been involved since Rachel Metcalfe started her schools for little children, and Jack Hoyland pioneered a Quaker High School. The quality of schools, like the quality of nursing, depended much on that sense of divine vocation which Rachel and Jack had both known.

Hilda herself, teacher as she was, continued to contribute in her own way. Verrier Elwin, after his visit the previous Christmas, had sent a young Brahmin-Christian *sadhu* named Yesudas Tiwari to benefit from her guidance. Tiwari had become 'Yesu-das' (servant to Jesus) as a result of reading Andrews' *Christ in the Silence*, and Hilda found pleasure in helping him to study western mysticism, while he in his turn helped her in the library. And at the other end of the educational scale the people of the three villages around Jamai had begun to ask for a school.

This was not surprising. Each conference naturally lasted only a few days, and in all the intervening periods, throughout that year, Hilda spent the greater part of each week at Jamai, going to Rasulia for the weekends to maintain all the contacts with the town which the Library Society gave her, and to help the young people who, like Yesudas Tiwari, sought her out. But her deepest satisfactions were in Jamai, in the humble manual service to the needy for which way opened so naturally. There, she found a friendless old Gond woman dying of cancer, took her to hospital, and when Bill Tandy said that nothing could be done, sheltered and nursed her to the end.<sup>10</sup>

Bill Tandy himself began to pay regular visits, both to Jamai and to the villages beyond it along the road to Betul. The hospital car was the old 'Chev' which Dr Gittins had driven so dramatically about the district 10 years earlier, and which was now on its last legs. Chhotelal the driver kept it going somehow, but it could carry only limited equipment. Needy crowds waited at every halt, and Bill longed for something better. Unexpectedly, he got it. One day Dame Elizabeth Cadbury arrived at the hospital. She had been taken ill during a train journey across India, and as she knew there was a Friends hospital at Itarsi, she had stopped off there for treatment. Bill found an ear infection and dealt with it successfully, so that after

a few days' care she was ready to resume her journey. 'What can I give the hospital,' she asked gratefully, 'as a small token of appreciation?'

I thought [Bill recalled] that on her lips the word *small* might be generously interpreted, so I told her that what we really needed was a travelling dispensary van. 'Get what you need,' she said, 'and send the bill to me.' I designed something that would serve both as dispensary and as ambulance, and in due course it arrived by rail from Calcutta. Chhotelal was enraptured; he cared for it with devotion. He did much more; when we visited villages together he explained their customs to me, and taught me the proper terms of respect to be used towards village elders and others.

Bill, thus willing to listen and learn, shared with Hilda a number of other stimulating ideas. Why, for example, should allopathic and ayurvedic medical traditions be regarded as opposed? Should not each learn what the other has to teach? He would have liked to invite a qualified ayurvedic doctor to work with him for a year, but could not find even the very modest sum required.

Another idea had been planted in his mind by a village woman named Sukani. Her husband was a forest guard who had been brought to hospital seriously injured. His life was saved, and as he recovered Sukani stayed in the hospital with him and learned all she could of basic medical skills, which she used to help her neighbours when she returned home. Might not other village women be encouraged and helped to do the same?

Hilda meanwhile read Jawaharlal Nehru's new *Autobiography*; she kept in touch with other Friends who, like Mary Barr, were working under Gandhi's direction. One of these was a young Canadian Friend, Mary Chesley, who had reached India in 1934 about the same time as Hilda herself. Gandhi sent her to live for a time with Mary Barr, and later she had joined the Mahila Ashram (women's ashram) at Wardha and taken an Indian name, Tara. Although she had private means, she kept nothing for herself; she gave all her income away with a reckless devotion which made Hilda feel rather anxious about her. In the summer of 1936 she set out along with others from Mahila Ashram, on the traditional pilgrimage to the Himalayan shrine of Badrinath. She never reached it, she fell ill and died on the way. Hilda grieved, as did many others, when the news reached her.

In the autumn new companions arrived. One was Hilda's old friend Katherine Lloyd, who brought more books and tools, and her own 'leisured mind' and lovely voice. Along with her came a young Swiss Friend, Madeleine Jéquier, who was a merry and most skilful hostess, and Anne Caton of the Indian Village Welfare Association, who planned to stay until March. They were all there to help with the two student

conferences which succeeded one another during the Diwali<sup>12</sup> holidays in October–November.

The first conference was organised by the Hislop College Social Service League, but included students of other colleges also. Two young participants from the Agricultural College, Banwa Lal Choudhury and Dwarka Prasad Persai, belonged to villages in the Hoshangabad District, and for both of them that conference was a turning-point in life. A few years later both were helping to carry out Gandhi's educational programme at Sevagram; both became connected with Friends' work in India, and understood its spiritual roots, although neither became formally a Friend.

A second group of students came from the Christian College at Indore, and was led by Professor S. G. Patil, who became as close a friend as Dr Moses of Nagpur. Hilda challenged these students to work out from scratch 'a five-year plan for meeting the human needs of a village'. (Five-year plans at Government level had not then been thought of!) As always, her enthusiasm roped everybody in. Her young secretary, she discovered, had once been 'mess-master' in his college hostel – he could be mess-master for the conferences too! She took a personal interest in each one of the students who came; she would take little groups, two or three together, for an evening stroll across the fields between Rasulia and 'the Rocks', making friends and talking individually in a way they never forgot. Afterwards as darkness fell, they would gather in the Meeting House for a period of worship which was memorable too.

The last day of the second conference was memorable in a special way. In the very early morning C. F. Andrews reached Itarsi by an overnight train. Hilda met him there, taking with her Yesudas Tiwari, to whom *Christ in the Silence* had meant so much, and they went to breakfast with the little group at Jamai. 'There in unhurried quiet he sat and taught us,' wrote Hilda. He talked appropriately of the meaning of 'conversion', and advised Tiwari to remain at Rasulia for a full year. Later in the day Hilda took Andrews to Rasulia, where students and others were all eager to meet him. 'He sat among them in our own Quiet Room, an aged man ripe in his wisdom. Peace was his signature on that day, his benediction on this tiny enterprise for which he had worked and prayed.'<sup>13</sup>

Then came Christmas 1936, and guests to share it. Ranjit Chetsingh came again, with his wife and his little son Rajan; Carl Heath, who was visiting India on behalf of the Friends Service Council, came with his wife Effie. So did Joan Clapham of the YWCA in Bombay. A few years earlier she had been a junior assistant at Friends House in London, and then spent time at Woodbrooke, partly as a student, partly as secretary-typist to C. F. Andrews as he worked on *Christ in the Silence* and prepared it for the press. Early in 1936 another English Friend, Kathleen Whitby, had



C. F. Andrews and  
Ranjit Chetsingh.

also arrived in Bombay; her husband was a business man in the city, and her home soon became a place where for years to come visiting Friends found a warm welcome and Quakerly fellowship. She did not visit Rasulia that Christmas, but two months later, when the Jamai brickyard clinic was opened, she sent Hilda a generous gift towards the cost of medicines.

In February 1937 Yesudas Tiwari completed his year of study and went to seek out Sadhu Sunder Singh on the road to Tibet. Katherine Lloyd went back to England, and during the summer Hilda herself followed her, to share her hopes for the future of her Ashram-Settlement with Friends there. She was in vigorous health, and full of enthusiasm, but the finance department of the Friends Service Council asked in vain for clear accounts of the cost of the work. She had no interest in accounts. 'Money is one of the most cracked things on earth,' she once wrote. 'It seems so chancy, and a full life depends on it so little.' Did discrepancies in accounts really matter?

What mattered, in Hilda's eyes, was the right development of the work she had begun. She was over 60, and she was clear that she should not stay on in India indefinitely; there should be Indian Quaker leadership of a quality able to serve 'the neighbourhood, the Province and India' in linked and widening circles. She had sought such leadership from the

beginning; when in 1934 Dorothy Hersey's friend Grace Jivanandan paid a visit Hilda recognised her quality and invited her to join them. Grace had felt however that her own right place was in the Punjab, and she continued to make her home with her family in Lahore.

Ranjit Chetsingh on the other hand had been strongly attracted by what he had seen when he visited at Christmas 1935. He had kept in touch, and in December 1936 brought his wife to see Rasulia and Jamai. There, along with the merriment which Madeleine provided under the twinkling lamps of a 'Christmas Diwali' there had been serious consultations with Hilda and with Carl Heath about the possibility of the Chetsinghs being Hilda's successors, although Ranjit made it clear that he could not be free for the work until November 1937.

When Hilda visited England that summer there was further thinking and planning with Carl Heath and others. She eagerly looked forward to 'a chance for a real Woodbrooke-in-India', and she was clear not only about the importance of having Indians to direct it, but also that it should be completely independent of the Friends Mission.

It is impossible [she wrote], that the heads of the Ashram, Indian or English, should be labelled missionaries. A centre of study and service for the whole neighbourhood, and for students from all over India, open to *all* who care to serve, of whatever religious or political bias, cannot be a missionary institution.

It might of course cooperate with the Mission wherever possible, as she herself had done, but it must remain distinct.

While Hilda was discussing these matters in England needs were arising in India at a very basic level. Some time earlier Bill Tandy, following a suggestion made by Heinz von Tucher, had taken on a Makoriya boy named Wycliffe, who had completed High School, and trained him as a much-needed laboratory technician. That autumn his competence and devotion were tested by a widespread epidemic of cholera. Patients poured into the hospital, many of them suffering from the serious dehydration caused by the disease, and each needing several pints of sterilised solution to replace the fluid they had lost and save their lives.

For several weeks [wrote Bill], Dr Jacob and I worked in alternative six hour shifts, and, watched patients come back to life as the solution ran into their veins. It was Wycliffe's job to keep us supplied, and he did it. When he ate and slept I do not know; he never left the laboratory.

There were not enough beds; the sick lay on the floor, and doctors and nurses knelt beside them to do their work. Then one day a local village farmer brought a gift of eight cots from the bazaar – he had seen the need

and done what he could, and his generous kindness raised the spirits of the whole staff, exhausted as they all were.

This was the situation when Hilda Cashmore returned in October 1937. She threw herself into the task of nursing the many patients in Rasulia and Jamai, and her intrepidity put new heart into everyone. When the Chetsinghs arrived in November they too set to work, with generous help from the Hoshangabad Government Hospital. This gave Hilda more time for Jamai, where she had other things to attend to. The well must have a proper parapet, and a good drainage channel; a local friend gave the money, the villagers themselves happily did the work. And all the while visitors came and went – Frederic Gravely from Madras, S. G. Patil from Indore, some Hislop College boys, Dr Mardan Singh of Itarsi, who had been one of the delegates from India to a Friends World Conference in USA, and had been Hilda's fellow-traveller on the return journey to India.

On 15th December Hilda left Ranjit in charge and slipped away, though she remained for a time within reach. The All India Women's Conference held its annual session at Nagpur, and Hilda renewed many old friendships there. She visited Anne Caton at Indore, and explored western India, and at the end of February 1938 came back for a final party before she sailed for England. 'It was,' wrote Ranjit, 'just the kind of informal, unostentatious gathering she likes.'

When Hilda Cashmore died in 1943 the friends who had known her in the various phases of her life spoke of her achievement as 'a clear synthesis of prayer and work, of intellectual effort and much practical action'. In India the practical action had not all been on a high level of seriousness; part of it, in Rasulia, was 'a children's club'. It was entirely in character that the 'venerable old lady' who in 1932 had made friends with the children of 'Rasulia depressed' should provide a club for the children of 'Rasulia transformed'. But apart from a brief reference in one of her own letters, nothing is known of it.

## Notes to Chapter XX

- 1 The quotation is from Charles Raven's book *The Theological Basis of Christian Pacifism*.
- 2 Material about Hilda Cashmore's life is derived chiefly from a memorial volume privately printed in 1944 (she died in 1943) to which friends who had worked with her at various periods contributed accounts of her work, and in which a number of her own letters from India are quoted *verbatim*.
- 3 Letter quoted in note 2, above.
- 4 The word ashram is made up of two components: *shram* = work, and the intensive prefix *ā*. This intensive work was to be carried on in spiritual, intellectual and physical ways.
- 5 See for example his insistence on regulations in 1909-10.
- 6 Irene, the daughter of the 'missionary statesman' J.R.Mott, had married a distinguished Indian Christian Justice Vivian Bose.
- 7 Thomas Addison, now living in England, has been a source of information which the writer gratefully acknowledges.
- 8 He was the owner of a well-known tile works. Bagra tiles were locally famous.
- 9 See chap.21, below.
- 10 This piece of humble caring service was described by Joan Clapham, who visited at Christmas 1936.
- 11 This story, with many others, is told in Bill Tandy's book of reminiscences *The Ever-Rolling Stream*, 1985.
- 12 Diwali, meaning literally a row of lamps, is the great Indian festival of October/November which celebrates the end of the rainy season and the return of clear starry nights.
- 13 Journal letter from Hilda Cashmore.

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Vision Fades : 1937 to 1941

*Let us confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.*

GENESIS XI : 7

AT THE END OF 1937 the vision of Woodbrooke-in-India seemed within reach. There were western-Indian Quaker groups in many places. In Bombay were P. A. Wadia and Kathleen Whitby, and attenders such as J. K. Mehta and the Macleans. Nalin Ganguly was in Calcutta, so now was Joan Clapham. In Lucknow and its neighbourhood were Charles Revis, Sucha and Veida Khera, and Stanley Jones. Harold Loukes, now happily married, was in Delhi, along with Bill and Eleanor Hindle, who had a wide range of contacts both there and in Simla.

In Indore were Hilda Cashmore's friends in the Christian college, and also Joseph Hutchinson, who was engaged in basic cotton research which took him sometimes to Coimbatore in the cotton region of the south, where there were other Friends, Irene Howe of the Madras Educational Service, and Catherine Karunakar. Catherine, born in Jamaica, had been one of Mary Allen's 'East Indian' schoolgirls there and had gone to the United States for college education. There she met K. T. Paul's son P. D. Karunakar; they married, and he was now on the staff of the Coimbatore College of Agriculture. Over the border in Kerala was Sally Coey, now teaching in the Christava Mabilalaya, the women's educational centre at Alwaye. And not far from Coimbatore was another small but living point of sympathy. E. S. Sambayya, who had been one of the regular attenders of the Lahore Meeting, was himself from the south, and had married a Tamil girl named Padma. Her father, T. Narasimhan, was devoting himself to the welfare of the 'criminal tribes' of the Salem district, adjacent to Coimbatore, with merry commonsense and a simple personal faith which brought him, like his son-in-law, close to Friends in spirit.



The group in Madras had lost the Danns, who had retired to England that year, but had some new members. Audrey Wilson had joined the staff of the YWCA, and Grace Gibb had taken Doris Chetsingh's place at Women's Christian College. There was an Indian Friend A. K. Sharma, who had joined the Society in Britain, and Marjorie Sykes, a teacher at the Bentinck High School for Indian girls, who had been an attender for several years, had also become a Friend in 1936.

In Nagpur there were close links with Hislop College, and the Indian Principal Dr D. G. Moses was eager that Friends should share even more directly in the life of the college, while an Indian Friend Dr Santoshlal Robert was working at the Mayo Hospital. He, along with Dr Mardan Singh, had attended the Friends World Conference earlier in the year.

In Bhopal there were other Indian Friends, led by Dr J. P. Johory and including his revered father. They had invited Elizabeth Butler to come and live in the city, and she had made many friends, ranging from Sir Joseph and Lady Bhore to the young Muslim who gave her electric lighting free of charge 'in memory of the little boy he used to be'. (Louise Walker had been very good to that little boy, and later when he became a student in Toronto she had introduced him to the Friends there.) In Itarsi the Friends Institute flourished, its young members studied Quakerism with Geoffrey Maw, and D. M. Dar's son Stanley and Mardan Singh's son Paul were eager helpers.

Most of these groups originated in British-Indian connections, but there was a good deal of informal participation by those connected with the American Friends mission also. The Quaker-led India Sunday School Union attracted American, British and Indian Friends alike; friendly personal intervisitation took place, and the two nurses, Edith Bevan and Alena Calkins, became good friends.

There were therefore many potential growing-points of Quaker life which might have been nurtured and linked by a 'Woodbrooke in India', so that an *Indian* fellowship of Friends might have come into being. It did not happen. The vision faded, and some of the links were broken.

No one was to blame. Ranjit Chetsingh, to whom Hilda Cashmore had entrusted her vision, was a deeply-concerned Friend, but his background and experience had given him different priorities. Provision for Quaker fellowship in study, the essence of the 'Woodbrooke in India' idea, did not come first with him.

One of Ranjit's priorities was education, and in 1937, just before he began his work at Rasulia, Gandhi raised the whole question of what education meant, by laying before the nation his proposals for 'basic national education'. Children, he said, learn not by listening but by *doing*; let them

therefore *do* some useful piece of work together, work which would help to meet their basic needs of food, clothing or shelter, and in the process draw out the full potential of each child, physical, intellectual and spiritual.<sup>1</sup>

Ranjit followed the development of this programme with great interest. E. W. Aryanayakam, who was carrying it out on Gandhi's behalf, was a man he had known for years. Formerly they had both been Travelling Secretaries of the Student Christian Movement, and they had both exchanged their original western 'Christian' names for Indian ones derived from their family history. Now Aryanayakam was conducting a training course for Basic School teachers at a centre in Wardha, the town near which Gandhi's Sevagram ashram was situated.

By April 1938 Ranjit had got Aryanayakam to speak about Basic Education at a public meeting in Itarsi, and was planning to get one of Aryanayakam's students, when they finished their course in October, to start a Basic School in some village near Rasulia. 'If Basic Education succeeds,' he wrote, 'it will work a silent revolution and bring the disciplined outlook needed for democracy.'

Another interest was naturally the Adult Education for which Ranjit had had special training in England in 1930. He had already taken up this work while in Punjab, and in 1938 he took part in an all-India consultation in Delhi. This resulted in the formation of an all-India Adult Education Association, and he was chosen as one of the four Vice-Presidents. The other three represented the special interests of women, industrial labour and the Muslim community and Ranjit became responsible for editing and publishing the Association's periodical. He also, with the cooperation of the Vice-Chancellor of Nagpur University, started an Adult Education Union for the Central Provinces and became its Secretary.

Ranjit also realised the value of village industries both in Basic and Adult Education, and got a number of people from Rasulia and Jamai trained by the All-India Village Industry Association at Wardha in such skills as bee-keeping, soap-making and paper-making. Rasulia's reports, in his later years there, were printed on Rasulia's own hand-made paper. And when the school for the three little Jamai-area villages was opened, it was a teacher/bee-keeper who took charge.

Meanwhile, in the Diwali holidays of 1938, Ranjit did as Hilda Cashmore had done and invited students for a conference. Most came from Hislop College but there were one or two local lads also. The theme was 'Rural Reconstruction', and there were two leaders, both Indian graduates of the London School of Economics. One came from Wilson College, Bombay, and presented an 'orthodox' view, but the other, J. C. Kumarappa, was the leader of Gandhi's Village Industries Association.

Like Ranjit himself and E. W. Aryanayakam, he was an Indian Christian who had discarded a 'westernised' name for an Indian one. Discussions were animated, and Hilda's old friend Rudra Lodha of Bagra allowed the students to make a survey of labour conditions in his tileworks and in the village. The conference was a success, but it was the last of its kind, for with Ranjit's other interests there was too much to do.

Ranjit had in fact sought for help. The Quaker group in Lahore to which he had once belonged had disintegrated – Theodore and Winifred Burt had gone back to England and others had left the city. There remained Grace Jivanandan, working in Aitchison College, and Dr Pars Ram, who had been a regular attender and was Ranjit's close friend. He was Professor of Psychology at Forman Christian College, and he fully shared Hilda Cashmore's longing to give humble manual service to the lowliest, to learn to *feel* as they did. He had not formally become a Friend, but Ranjit thought him 'the nearest approach to an Indian Quaker' whom he knew. He tried hard, with the backing of Shoran Singha and other Friends in London, to persuade the college to release him for work at Rasulia, but without success.

During this first year at Rasulia Ranjit and Doris were living in the bungalow which had originally been built for the Taylors. They were accustomed to 'western' housing, they had their little boy, and a second boy was born in October. Ranjit then proposed to build a new bungalow for his family on the rising ground near the big well. Paul Sturge of the Friends Service Council, who had visited the Chetsinghs earlier in the year, approved the proposal but queried some features of the plan, in particular the blocking of the southern aspect of the house, which Indian tradition wisely leaves open, by a line of bathrooms. Paul was right, but Ranjit like most people had his little foibles. He could be slow to take advice – particularly from a foreigner! – and he went ahead with his original plan. The *building* was sound and strong, but succeeding occupants of the house have wished that he had shown himself a better *architect*!

At the end of the year a large international missionary conference was held at Tambaram near Madras. Among the handful of Quakers present were Herbert G. Wood from England and Ranjit from India. Another member was a man whom Ranjit and other Friends greatly respected, C. F. Andrews. Listening to the discussions, Ranjit felt that there were some matters, particularly those involving relationships between Christians and other religions, on which Friends were likely to differ from the majority. Could there not be some provision for consultation with one another about these?

One of these matters was the large-scale 'mass movement' into the Christian community which had been taking place in parts of India. Most

missionaries welcomed this warmly; few saw, as Hilda Cashmore did, the political repercussions likely to follow in the context of 'communal' electorates. In 1934 Bishop J. Wascom Pickett of the Methodist Episcopal Church asked a missionary, Donald McGavran, to make a survey of the situation in central India, in the area where both American and British Friends' missions were working. The survey was followed in 1935-36 by a series of conferences with Christian leaders, in one of which the senior American Friend Esther Baird was present. She returned to Nowgong full of enthusiasm, and got her American and Indian colleagues to renew their efforts to win over the *chamar* (leatherworker) community there.

At about the same time Geoffrey Maw and Heinz von Tucher went to see a mass movement area round Maheshwar, further west down the river. On their return Geoffrey and his friend Khushilal made intensive efforts over some years to persuade the Gond communities around Sohagpur to become Christian. Neither they nor the Americans succeeded; both Chamars and Gonds made the same response, rooted in their sense of identity and their pride in their traditional skills. 'We honour Christ,' they said, 'we will pray in his name, but we will not break our bonds of loyalty to our caste.'

In November 1938 Donald McGavran himself, with his fellow-evangelist Bhakt Singh, paid a visit to Bundelkhand. The Friends there were shaken. The deed by which they held their land in Chhatarpur included a promise 'not to baptise'. Were they keeping that promise in the spirit intended, by merely refraining from outward water-baptism? McGavran urged that there should be no more compromise, and called for what he called a 'show-down'. The Bundelkhand Church Council accepted this position; it was agreed that

the new convert must acknowledge Jesus publicly as the *only* incarnation of God, the Bible as the *only* scripture, and the church as a brotherhood which every believer *must* join.

This decision marks the beginning of a period of alienation between the Bundelkhand mission and the British Friends in Hoshangabad, many of whom were as eager to proclaim the Gospel as they were. British Friends however tended to believe with Joseph Taylor that their task was 'to bring men to Christ and leave them there', in the faith that the Light of Christ would guide each one in the path that was right for him. During the years that followed, the years of the Second World War, Bundelkhand Friends were isolated from the other Quaker groups and went their separate ways.

It was of course natural that British Friends should be more aware than the American of the political environment of their work. At the end of 1938 articles appeared in a widely-read Christian review named *World Dominion*, dealing with Gandhi's attitude to the 'untouchable' castes from which the

mass movement into Christianity emanated. The articles suggested that Gandhi's championship of 'untouchables' was merely a shrewd political move to prevent them from becoming Christians. One article, written by McGavran and offensively phrased, purported to describe a meeting between Gandhi, Bishop Pickett and V. S. Azariah, who was by then Bishop of Dornakal in South India.<sup>2</sup> Azariah at once condemned the article as 'a cruel fabrication with no justification direct or indirect in fact', but his accusers gave Gandhi no opportunity to meet or answer them, and many British Friends who knew from personal contact Gandhi's standards of truth, felt disgusted. By that time in fact a number of British officials themselves shared their attitude. One of them was the British Resident in Bundelkhand, Walter Campbell. 'It is a tragedy,' he wrote, 'that we [British] have been so long in realising how absolutely sincere Gandhi is.'

During the same years another freedom struggle was having an impact on India. This was the civil war being waged in Spain by the would-be dictator General Franco against the legitimate government of the country. A young German named Herbert Fischer, who had left his own country because of his strong opposition to the dictator Adolf Hitler, was working in France and doing all he could to help sufferers in Spain. Then with an introduction to Mahatma Gandhi he started overland for India, and when he reached Basra, Indian residents there helped him in Gandhi's name with a passage to Bombay. By 1937 he was living in Gandhi's ashram.

British Friends also organised a Spanish Relief Committee headed by that friend of India Horace Alexander, and one of Friends' new recruits to India, Donald Groom, had his interest in India and in Gandhi kindled in the course of his work for the victims of the Spanish Civil War. These new recruits however did not reach India until 1940. One of Herbert Fischer's fellow-workers in Spanish relief had arrived two years earlier, in 1938, with an introduction to Bill Tandy, ready to help wherever he could. **His name was George Jones; his fiancée Margaret joined him in January 1939, and after they were married she began to help in the hospital. George was obsessed by the poverty of the Gond villages; he would spend all his time there, refused to eat because others were hungry, and visited Margaret occasionally only to disappear again. Margaret was troubled, so were others, and in September came tragedy. George died of exhaustion in a Gond village; Margaret seven months' pregnant, was delivered of a still-born baby. She turned to Gandhi, and on his advice took a two-year training for nurse-midwives at the Wadia Maternity Hospital in Bombay. By 1941 she had found her field of service among Friends in India.**

Meanwhile in the summer of 1939 Ranjit Chetsingh paid a short visit to England to keep in touch with Paul Sturge and others. This was possible because Pars Ram was able to spend his own summer vacation in

Rasulia, and to see some of Ranjit's work during the last 18 months bear fruit. Two schools were opened, one at Jamai and one at Phepartal near Rasulia, with a local teacher Yohan Mohandal in Jamai and one of Aryanayakam's basic-trained teachers at Phepartal. At both the opening ceremonies there was a crowd of approving village parents, and Pars Ram described both schools as 'excellent'.

Soon afterwards, at the beginning of September, Britain declared war on Germany, and the Viceroy of India declared India to be at war also. But for two full years the people of India took almost no notice; their leaders had not been consulted, and they remained largely absorbed in their own concerns. Ranjit felt nevertheless that the war was a matter on which 'Friendly exchange of thought' was needed, and he invited Friends from all over India to meet at Rasulia at the end of the year. Many came, and an agreed statement was drawn up, sent to the heads of Christian bodies in India and printed in a number of Indian newspapers.

Violence cannot be removed by further violence [it read]. The freedom destroyed by the German government cannot be won again by a war against the German people. We declare our faith in the power of unarmed love. That faith, shown in practice, may be India's greatest gift to the world, for we rejoice to know that it is shared by men of influence including Mahatma Gandhi.

One of the Friends present was Marjorie Sykes. By that time she was no longer in Madras. From 1935 onwards, when 'Communal electorates' were dividing religious 'communities' into mutually suspicious groups, even the friendly relationships in Bentinck School had been affected, and she had begun to look for an opening for educational work in India outside any sectarian context. In 1937 she was much attracted by Gandhi's Basic Education plan; earlier still her interest in Tagore had been aroused by an Indian colleague who visited Santiniketan.

In 1938, on his way to the International Missionary Conference in Madras, the English Friend Herbert G. Wood went to renew Quaker links with Tagore, who greatly enjoyed his visit and expressed his desire for another Quaker colleague. The upshot was that by July 1939, with the backing of Friends, Marjorie had joined the staff at Santiniketan. In December therefore, when the Friends' statement on the war was published, she was able to bring it to the notice of Tagore, who at once issued a vigorous statement of his own in support. Both statements helped to stimulate the formation of a peace group in Calcutta led by Horace Collins and Mary Greenwell. Horace, nearly 20 years earlier, had been inspired by Joseph Taylor in the Friends Settlement; he was now a Baptist minister in the city. Mary was a YWCA worker from New Zealand who had met Friends in Woodbrooke. By mid-1941 the group numbered over 30

and included not only Indian or other Christians, but Hindu, Brahmo, Muslim and humanist members also. Marjorie, in Santiniketan, helped when she could.

Ranjit also, who had signed the Friends' statement as Clerk of the meeting, was invited by other Indian Christians to undertake delicate and difficult tasks of reconciliation, and in particular to attempt to bring about better understanding between Gandhi and the Muslim leader Mahomed Ali Jinnah. Ranjit believed that Friends were specially called to such work, and during 1941 he gave much time to it.

Then at the end of the year he convened a second all-India Friends Conference, to which he also invited Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was unable to come, but sent his wise and trusted secretary Mahadev Desai in his place. 'The war which will end all wars,' said Mahadev, 'is that between violence and non-violence, and *all* the forces of non-violence must stand together.' About 30 Friends were present, and the statement which embodied their reflections was very different from that of two years earlier. The war with Germany was in a critical phase but they did not mention it.

We find ourselves at one [they wrote] with those of other faiths who are working for a righteous social order . . . silence in the face of social injustice and oppression is a denial of Christ.

The statement pointed forward to much that was to come in the post-war period, while Friends' immediate concerns were expressed in the appointment of a continuation committee to promote *action* towards resolving intercommunal conflict.

So, between 1938 and 1941, the vision of a Woodbrooke-in-India had been obscured by other valid Quakerly concerns. Yet the misunderstandings and conflicts among Friends themselves, which came to a head in Itarsi during those same years, underlined the need for just that patient long-term mutual interpretation which a Woodbrooke-in-India might have provided. Part of the loneliness which Ranjit often felt in Rasulia was due to his awareness of the unhappy situation in Itarsi.

In 1937 things seemed to be going well. True, the hospital buildings were in bad condition, but the London committee had agreed to replace them and had sought the help of the architect Reg Dann, who had drawn up an excellent plan. Bill Tandy, who was troubled that caste custom and prejudice often prevented him from dieting patients as he wished, wrote to Gandhi for his advice, and Gandhi invited him to come and talk over the problem in person.

He looked at me with piercing eyes [Bill recalled], then smiled and spoke of his Quaker friends. He was full of commonsense and puckish humour, asked practical questions about the hospital, and

said he would like to help me. He gave me a letter written in Hindi, which we hung up in the verandah of the Outpatients block; groups of patients and their friends could often be seen clustered around it in animated argument.

During this visit to Gandhi's ashram Bill met Herbert Fischer, who had made friends with a young Assamese, Jugneshwar Gogoi, through their shared enthusiasm for the cooperative movement. With Gandhi's consent Herbert and 'Jug' (as he was called) joined Bill at Itarsi. They first travelled together to see the medical cooperatives Harry Timbres had organised at Sriniketan, and the farming cooperatives at Gosaba, and when they got back Herbert started a cooperative society among the Itarsi weavers, with Geoffrey Maw's warm approval. This was quickly successful and others followed. In 1934, when septic tanks were first becoming known, Ratcliffe Addison had got Khushilal trained in their construction, and began to install them in the hospital. Herbert and Jug now got unemployed Christian youths to form a cooperative sanitation society and build septic tanks for customers elsewhere. That too was a success, and then came a cooperative shop, managed by a committee drawn from all the religious communities in the town.

The government had recently made additional land available for the hospital, for it recognised the value of its work. On this land Jug built three simple 'model houses' where patients' relatives might stay. The cost was met by local subscription, and the idea was to encourage those who used them to build similar improved houses in their villages. Jug would sit with these visitors in the evenings and talk about how Gandhi's 'constructive programme' might make their village community happier.

In 1938 however things began to go wrong – first, in the matter of buildings. Geoffrey Maw wrote a lively description of the Itarsi bungalow where he then lived and worked:

All the floors are saucer-shaped. I have a special office chair with long legs at the back, so that I can sit level at my table, which slopes towards me like a schoolboy's desk.

The 'saucer-shaped' floors were due to the failure of builders to master the special skills required for the unstable local 'black cotton soil'. Geoffrey joked about his discomforts, but it was no laughing matter when good nurses refused to stay in the hospital because of similar troubles.

The architect Reg Dann, in failing health, had been obliged to leave India in 1937, and the hospital building programme was delayed, month after month, in a way that made Bill Tandy increasingly irritable. But other problems, more intractable than those of buildings, arose from Bill's own professional outlook. He *was* a brilliant doctor and surgeon, and his many

successes during the early years of his service made him less ready to listen and learn than he had once been. He concentrated on the physical, and ignored the mental and spiritual elements in health and wholeness, of which Geoffrey Maw had a profound understanding. A patient suffering in mind and body came to this Christian hospital seeking sympathy and healing; after a few days' observation Bill declared that there was nothing wrong with him, that he was in effect an idler, and that what he needed was WORK. Shocked, the patient walked out of the hospital, and Edith Bevan who had seen the incident told Geoffrey what had happened. Geoffrey tracked the man to the railway station, but too late; he had left for Badrinath, said someone. 'I more than most,' lamented Geoffrey, 'could have told him that peace of soul would not be found in Badrinath.'

Edith Bevan herself was due for leave towards the end of 1938. In 1937 therefore the Tandys urged that a fully qualified State Registered Nurse should be appointed as a permanent addition to the hospital staff, and the London committee chose Lucille Sibouy, whom Mary Allen had adopted from the East Indian community in Jamaica, and who had had her professional training in Britain.

Lucille had had a chequered history. Her family origins were in Punjab, where during the famine of 1896 the government had encouraged whole village populations to emigrate to the sugar plantations of Jamaica. One such village was that of Lucille's grandfather Shiv Ram in West Punjab, where a French mission had been at work. The French influence showed in personal names; Lucille's grandfather became Sibouy, his wife her grandmother was another Lucille. They went to Jamaica with the rest of the village, and when their daughter Marie grew to womanhood she was raped by the son of the plantation owner, a young man named Kenneth Pringle. The labourers, the old village community, confronted him in a body, he acknowledged his responsibility, and the child born of the union was named Lucille Ananda Pringle – the Ananda (Joy) possibly because she was a 'child of love'.

When little Lucille was seven her mother died, and it was then that Mary Allen adopted her. A few years later, as an intelligent girl of 11 or 12, she was ready to enter a secondary school. The school required a birth certificate, but Kenneth Pringle's family would not allow their name to be used in such an official record, and the certificate was therefore issued in the mother's name, Sibouy. For Lucille it meant the destruction of her identity, a psychological insecurity which was reflected later in the waywardness and insistence on status which marked her first years in India.

Lucille reached Itarsi towards the end of 1937, and Molly Tandy was troubled that she was so slow to begin work in the hospital, where Edith, tired and ill, badly needed help. The level-headed Molly saw, better than

anyone, the possible difficulties ahead; why, she asked, should Edith not take the SRN examination in India, as some American nurses did? She was qualified in all but name to take the lead. But this sensible suggestion was not followed up and Lucille used the 'authority' of her own SRN to make changes in hospital routine which Edith disliked and resented.

When Herbert Fischer returned from his visit to Bengal he and Lucille met, and by April 1938 they were engaged to be married. The wedding took place in June at Pachmarhi, a civil ceremony followed by a Meeting for Worship at which the only Friends present were Mary Allen and the Tandys. Within a month there was such open hostility between Tandys and Fischers on one side and Mid-India Friends on the other that Geoffrey Maw and Shivalal spent hours trying in vain to restore the goodwill which had prevailed when Herbert first arrived. By October there was open confrontation. Harry Mirchulal, the able son of the Rasulia watchman, had in 1936 completed his training as a Christian pastor and was happily married to an educated wife. The Church Council appointed him to Itarsi where he became much interested in the various cooperative enterprises, and was the valued and trusted secretary of the cooperative shop. So when he was transferred to Hoshangabad and the shop lost his help, Bill Tandy protested strongly and a violent dispute ensued.

Both sides behaved unreasonably. Bill wrote to the India Committee in London: 'We want non-violent social change, *you* want us to please first the spoiled children of the mission.' Amy Montford pleaded with him to realise that his own violent reactions were part of the problem, and that while he might rightly query *policies* he should not wound *persons*. Some older missionaries on the other side were suspicious of anything the Fischers did, however innocent, even questioning their right to entertain their own guests in a 'mission' bungalow!

When Edith Bevan left for furlough at the end of the year the hospital urgently needed a second nursing sister, for Lucille now had undefined health problems and it was clear she could not carry on alone. A friend of Mary Barr named Barbara Hartland came to the rescue. She was an SRN, and that December she visited Amy Montford at Friends House and offered a year's service which was gratefully accepted. She sailed at once, and the Tandys and Fischers welcomed her, for she fully shared their admiration for Gandhi, and she did much-needed and valuable work in the hospital.

The underlying tensions remained, and early in 1939 they came to a head. Myrtle Aldren Wright, who had in 1930 been Young Friends' spokesman in their concern for India, and had since worked closely with Amy Montford, reached India towards the end of 1938 for a visit which extended into the first months of 1939 and included a long stay in the

Itarsi area. She was a perceptive observer, and she concluded that Bill Tandy and Lucille were mainly responsible for the continuing tensions. Herbert was generally liked, but Herbert loved Lucille and supported her, no matter what she did. That spring she wrote to Edith in England, and sent a copy of her letter to the India Committee. The letter hurt Edith so deeply that she felt she could work with Lucille no longer. By June, the Committee decided that both the Tandys and the Fischers must go.

The decision did not take effect immediately, and two months later came the war with Germany. Herbert and his fellow-German Heinz von Tucher were at once interned by the government, while their non-German wives were left free. It was however common knowledge that many of the Germans in India had no sympathy with Hitler, and after a time family camps were arranged where wives and children joined them. Heinz was soon playing the organ for all the religious services in his camp, Jewish and Christian, Catholic and Protestant alike! Early in 1940 Lucille too joined Herbert in internment, along with their first baby Karl. There they remained for the duration of the war. If the local Friends Mission had been willing to vouch for them they might have been released earlier, but memories of the former tensions were too strong. Nevertheless things became happier; Lucille had found a new inner security as a beloved wife and mother. When the war ended the family went with Herbert to his home in the eastern part of divided Germany.

Geoffrey Maw had been obliged to leave India at about the same time as Edith Bevan, at the end of 1938, for further treatment for his persistently troublesome hip, and could not return till 1941. Edith however was back by the beginning of 1940. The Tandys had left, and a well-qualified Indian woman, Dr Matthew, had taken Bill's place. She was friendly and popular, and also had musical gifts, and she revived the English services at the Friends Institute, which had lapsed after Geoffrey left, and for which many railway people were grateful. In April the long-delayed hospital building was ready at last, and was occupied with prayer and rejoicing, although it was not 'officially' opened till later. Edith wrote joyfully of the light, airy, well-planned wards, with their wide verandahs open to the south, and the careful provision for the nurses' needs. When the Governor of the Province performed the opening ceremony in October a new English Quaker doctor, Martin Ludlam, had just arrived. He made a good impression, but Dr Matthew remained in charge till the following year, so that he could study the language and have some Indian hospital experience.

So, it would seem, the difficult years were over. Martin had brought his wife Janet and their first child, little Amy, and they had travelled to India with another young Quaker couple, Donald and Erica Groom. During Donald's childhood his father had endured obloquy as a

conscientious objector in the First World War, and Donald shared his faith. As a Cooperative accountant in Reading he joined the Peace Pledge Union, and attracted many by his 'delightful smile, earnestness, commonsense and humour'. Then during the Spanish Civil War he worked for the British Friends' Relief Committee in Barcelona. By 1938 however nearly half a million people had fled from Spain to southern France, where they were in urgent need, and he went to Paris to arrange relief for them. He lived at the Quaker Centre, and there in the student club met an Indian student, B. V. Keskar, who talked about India and about Gandhi in a way that powerfully attracted him.



*Dr Mary Mammen.*

When war broke out in 1939 Donald spent a term in Woodbrooke under the guidance of Horace Alexander, whom he already knew as chairman of Friends' Spanish relief committee. The following year he and his newly-married wife Erica Hodgkin were appointed to Hoshangabad to take the place of the Priestmans. In 1941 another young Friend, Joseph Short, followed them. Joe came from New Zealand, and during the years before the war had studied horticulture in Germany. There he was drawn to Friends, and after more study at Kew he went on to Woodbrooke where in 1940 he met his future wife Phyllis Dodwell. Friends were glad to send him to Makoriya while the von Tuchers were interned, and he too was delighted with the opportunity he saw, both there and in Lahi, for the service he was qualified to give.

The agricultural and economic problem must be tackled right from the bottom, the soil itself [he wrote], and not only with Christians but with all.

'Not only with Christians but with all' – that phrase describes an attitude which all these newcomers shared. Their interest was in serving with their various skills the whole local community. The hospital had always done so, and the Grooms began to explore ways of doing so at Hoshangabad. This should have brought them close to Ranjit Chetsingh, whose work for education and for reconciliation, inspired though it was by his Christian-Quaker faith, was carried out among members of all communities. Yet sadly this did not happen. It soon became clear that Ranjit



found it difficult to get on personally with these young foreigners; he remained as isolated and restless as before, and by 1942 he was seeking an opening for Quaker service in a different context.

Before Joe Short arrived Martin Ludlam had taken charge of the Itarsi hospital. Dr Matthew had left, and there was a new woman doctor Mary Mammen, who proved a valuable colleague. She cared for women patients, partnered Martin in surgery, and sometimes went out with him in the ambulance-van. She also helped to teach Edith Bevan's nurses, whose results continued to be excellent. The hospital was full to overflowing, for she was very popular both with the poor villagers and with the richer private patients. She lived happily in one of the houses Jug had built – 'a small beautiful cottage,' she called it. They were too busy to think of the war.

### *Notes to Chapter XXI*

1 See *Harijan*, 8th May, 31st July, 9th and 30th October 1937, and E.W.Aryanayakam, 'The *nai talim* (Basic Education) movement', in *The Economics of Peace*, ed. S.K.George, Wardha 1952.

2 *World Dominion*, vol.16 no.3 (July 1938) pp.255-261.

## CHAPTER XXII

### India at War : Flood, Famine, Fire 1942 to 1945

*When giants fight, it is the grass beneath their feet  
that is trampled down.*

DURING THE FIRST MONTHS OF 1942 Japanese armies overran Burma, and Indian refugees in thousands fled by the 'Burma Road' through Manipur and Nagaland into India. Japanese forces also occupied the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal and thus had a base for possible air raids on Calcutta. The defence of India became an important part of war strategy, and the British War Cabinet therefore sent its left-wing member, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India with proposals for political concessions which, it was hoped, would give Britain the full and active support of the Indian people.

Before he left England, Cripps discussed these proposals in confidence with the Quaker-led India Conciliation Group. Its secretary, Agatha Harrison, with her finger on the pulse of India, said that she feared they came too late. She was right. By 1942 distrust had become too profound, and the proposals were rejected by the national leaders.

Friends themselves made quite a different proposal. By that time the Friends' Ambulance Unit had had wide experience of the measures needed to help the civilian population during the massive air raids on Britain. They thought their experience of welfare work and protective measures in London and other English cities might be of service to the people of India, and accordingly offered to send a small, carefully selected team of men and women to work in Indian cities.

At the beginning of 1942 Horace's much-loved wife Olive died, and in his loneliness he welcomed the opportunity to return to India in person.

In the middle of June he and the FAU's young team-leader Richard Symonds reached India in advance of the others, who followed by sea.

They went first to consult with Friends in the Itarsi area. Not many seniors were available. One was Geoffrey Maw, who had returned to India alone in 1941, leaving his wife with his now grown-up family in England. Another was Edith Backhouse, staunch and faithful after 40 years in India. Ranjit Chetsingh was still in Rasulia, glad to have Horace back in India. But the Addison's were gone. After their leave in 1935-36 Gail had found openings for service in India through the British Medical Association, first in Bastar state and then in Kalimpong, where Ratcliffe too had scope for his own skills, and during the years 1941-46 they were in Kalimpong.

The consultations in Itarsi ended dramatically as the first monsoon storm burst over the town. The new hospital building, so well planned, had not been so skilfully built; already in 1941 there had been cracks and leaks, and now the storm took off the whole roof. Leaving the local people to cope with the wreckage, Horace and Richard moved on to Sevagram to see Gandhi. Gandhi welcomed Horace warmly.

I want you [he said] to do for me what Andrews used to do. Since he died two years ago I have had no one to tell me when what I propose to do might alienate British people. I don't want to do that, I want to win them. *You* must take Andrews' place.

'No one can take Andrews' place,' replied Horace, 'but I will do my best.'

As for the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU), Gandhi readily gave it his blessing, and showed generous understanding of the problems that might arise.

If you find it necessary to avoid me for the sake of your work [he said], I shall not misunderstand you. But if you do want to consult me you are always welcome, and Symonds too.

By the end of July the rest of the FAU team had arrived. They spent August acclimatising (not an easy matter in the unhealthy monsoon season) and making friends in Calcutta. Some were already there. Horace had known Geoffrey and Kathleen Lowe as neighbours in Birmingham, where they were 'attenders' at Bournville Friends Meeting. Now Geoffrey was the Calcutta representative of his Birmingham business firm, and they had a quiet welcoming home outside the city. There was also Sudhir Ghosh. As a student in Cambridge in the years before the war Sudhir had been in close touch with the Indian Conciliation Group, and when he returned to Calcutta in 1940 he had built up a similar group there, which included Bishop Westcott and Arthur Moore of *The Statesman* newspaper.

At first the team had to live in a hotel, but by the beginning of September they had rented a house, No. 1 Upper Wood Street, as home and headquarters. In his first letter to English Friends from there, Horace made it clear that in his eyes the FAU was something more than a group of experts in civil defence. It was also, he wrote, 'a link between the spiritual traditions of the East and our little mystical Society in the West,' and as 'Warden' of the household he did all he could to strengthen the link. Amiya Chakravarty of Santiniketan was teaching at Calcutta University, and introduced the team to the cultural life of the city, while his Danish wife Haimanti helped with the housekeeping. Ramananda Chatterji, the distinguished editor of *The Modern Review*, became a good friend, and his lively daughters ran in and out like members of the family.

Horace watched with pleasure that month as the team set about its work.

I am impressed [he wrote] by the way the Unit members have all identified themselves with the people of India while keeping on perfectly good terms with officials. It is an almost miraculous achievement.

That may seem exaggerated language, but in the light of the events of August 1942, in which Horace himself had been involved, it was not really so.

Gandhi had always recognised that Stafford Cripps himself was a sincere friend, though the proposals he had brought from the British Government were unacceptable. He recognised too the suffering of Britain under air attacks. 'I feel as if my own home were being bombed,' he said. In mid-July, 'from an agonised heart,' he called on Britain to 'Quit India,' to entrust the government of India to her own chosen leaders – and as a result to win her whole-hearted support in the struggle against the dictators.

This call was published in the form of a resolution of the Indian National Congress. The last paragraph of the resolution (which Horace felt should not have been published so soon) carried a warning that if the demand were not granted civil disobedience would follow. Horace went at once to Gandhi and told him that British readers would inevitably focus their attention on this last paragraph, and regard it as 'a stab in the back'. Gandhi responded, and stated publicly that there was no question of immediate civil disobedience; the first step was to discuss the whole matter with the Viceroy. He was given no chance to do so; early in August he and all his fellow-workers were arrested and imprisoned. The news of the arrests caused an outburst of public anger throughout India; there were strikes, acts of sabotage, the destruction of anything regarded as 'government' property.



*The FAU in Calcutta, 1942.*

*From left to right standing: Horace Alexander, Pamela Bankart, Bob Savery, Glan Davies, Alec Horsefield, Jean Cottle, Sudhir Ghosh, Brian Groves; Sitting: Tod Lowry, Richard Symonds, Ken Griffin.*

It was in this atmosphere of sullen resentment that the small FAU team began its work. It had two women members; people remarked that it was the only war-relief agency which 'found work for women and women for the work'. At first, naturally, there were unexpected difficulties. Richard Symonds for example began organising fire-fighting teams, and recruited some of the 'country stalwarts from Bihar who formed so much of the labour force of Calcutta. But with the first air raid these 'stalwarts' ran away to their village homes, 'carrying their possessions in our fire-buckets!' Richard soon found that the people really to be relied upon were the prostitutes, present and alert at all hours. They became good friends. 'Long live our Commander!' they would cheer as he appeared. 'Women for the work' in a sense not originally intended.<sup>1</sup>

Another member, Brian Groves, developed an emergency Information Service which proved so useful that it was later extended to other threatened cities such as Dacca. Bob Savery concentrated on the needs of the Indian refugees who had come into Manipur from Burma. He identified himself with their life, wearing the same kind of clothes, eating the



*FAU members planning rehabilitation of a village (Hartibiya) devastated by 1942 cyclone. Stephen Lee and Sujata Davies are on the right.*

same kind of food, fit and happy. Pamela Bankart organised a Women's Emergency Volunteer service and was able to get many strongly nationalist women to cooperate in making it a success. Two more, Glan Davies and Jean Cottle, soon had to turn their attention not to war-time needs but to the demands of natural disaster.

In mid-October, barely a month after the Unit had begun work, a violent cyclonic storm struck the Midnapur District in south-west Bengal, a district whose people were strongly nationalist and suspicious of 'government'. There was a long coastal strip, where fertile ricelands had been built up from the silt of the Ganges estuary, and were protected from the sea by a dyke. A tidal wave broke the dyke, so that the whole strip, about 10 miles wide, was submerged under the sea, and the entire rice crop, near to harvest, was destroyed. Many villages were obliterated, over 11,000 people lost their lives, the cattle were drowned, the soil impregnated with salt.

The FAU contributed its mite, and filled what gaps it could in the massive rehabilitation plans. Glan Davies organised milk canteens using powdered milk, for cows could not be imported when there was no fodder,

and fed as many needy children as could be reached. Martin Ludlam sent the ambulance-van from Itarsi, feeling that it was more urgently needed in Midnapur, but even so transport was often inadequate, and it was not easy to ensure a regular supply of volunteer helpers. But somehow the milk distribution went on, and about 3,000 child-lives were saved.

Jean Cottle, after a campaign of inoculation against the real danger of cholera, organised an emergency hospital for some of the worst cases among the starving babies. This was situated at the local market town, Contai, where officials gladly found her a building, and more volunteers helped to care for the babies. But finding a building could not have been easy. Contai stands on slightly higher ground and the sea had not reached it, only the wind. But to the FAU workers who had seen the blitzed towns of England it looked as though it had been thoroughly 'blitzed', and some of its strongest houses lay in ruins. Yet such was the general goodwill felt towards the FAU that a hospital building was somehow provided.

Some of the volunteers who came to help were Friends and others from outside the area. One of them was Marjorie Sykes, who for the time being was no longer in Santiniketan. The year 1941 had been one of exceptional stress, when the death of an old friend Edward Barnes was followed two or three months later by that of Rabindranath Tagore. At the end of the year she therefore took six months' leave in India, and spent the first half of 1942 among old friends in the south. While there she agreed, with the approval of her Santiniketan colleagues, to fill the vacancy for a Professor of English in the Women's Christian College in Madras, as a temporary measure, seeing that no one could be recruited from Britain during the war. She lived through August 1942 among students who felt impelled to strike, while the best of them desired to do nothing unworthy of the spirit of Christ. It was a moving experience when the strike ended in a 'National Service Committee' which planned active construction work for *all*.

Marjorie then promised Horace Alexander to do what she could during her Christmas vacation to help in Midnapur.

It was strange [she wrote], to travel through that blighted land. The fields were a stretch of grey stubble where the dried sea salt glittered like hoar-frost. Nearly every tree was down, the few that still stood were cruelly mutilated, and festooned with the wreckage of the straw thatch of village homes. Yet among the people the beggar's whine was absent; the worse the conditions the greater were the patient cheerful courage and readiness to cooperate.

She could stay little more than a fortnight, but the time coincided with a period when volunteers were scarce, and not long afterwards she was able to send another helper. Sylvia Farr's husband had been a tea-planter,

unusual in the simplicity of his life and the humanity of his dealings with his workers. In 1942 he had died suddenly, and early in 1943 Sylvia, a 'friend of Friends', went to help the hard-pressed Friends in Midnapur.

Meanwhile the numbers in the FAU team had grown. By the summer of 1943 there were a full dozen with more on their way. The team began to make plans for long-term rehabilitation of the victims of the disaster. The old Quaker links with Santiniketan and Sriniketan meant that a group of rural reconstruction workers from there came to assess the scope for developing village industries. Another group with long-standing Quaker connections, the Servants of India Society, was carrying on relief work, parallel to that of the Friends, in the adjacent area of northern Orissa which had suffered in the same way at Midnapur. One of the recently arrived Friends, Leslie Cross, arranged a little piece of practical cooperation. The Servants could guarantee fodder by then for a dozen cows, Friends provided the cows, and more children benefited.

In 1943 changes were taking place elsewhere in India. Ranjit and Doris Chetsingh started a new Quaker Centre in Delhi. The need for 'something wholesome', some oasis of peace and sanity amid the constant political turmoil of the capital, had been felt for a long time. From 1939 onwards Bill and Eleanor Hindle, who were posted to Delhi by the YMCA, had done all they could to keep peace-loving people in touch with one another. Now they were no longer there, and Ranjit stepped into the gap.

Delhi is of strategic importance [he wrote]. The population is in the ratio of three Muslims to four Hindus, with a considerable Sikh element and some Christian.

The Quaker Centre, as he envisaged it, had a double aim. On the one hand it should provide a meeting-place, permeated by Christian-Quaker values, for all who desired mutual understanding and were ready to combat inter-communal and international hatred. On the other hand it should 'hold together all in India who are drawn to the Quaker way of life'. On the personal level he hoped to continue his work for adult education. A modest house was found in Karol Bagh, and the Centre came into being.

At the same time Horace was once more involved in Gandhi's affairs. Gandhi was accused in official circles of being responsible for the violence which had followed his arrest. Prisoner as he was, he registered his protest by a 21-day fast, during which Horace was allowed to visit him. As usual, Gandhi joked. He had no intention of risking his life, he said, and this was a 'fraudulent' fast – he was 'cheating' by taking lime juice in his drinking water! With the help of Gandhi's son Devadas, Horace suggested an arrangement which would allow Gandhi to study the 'evidence' against him, but the Viceroy would not consider it. Horace felt he could do no

more. The FAU was well established, his successors as Wardens at Upper Wood Street, John and Mary Burt, were already on their way, and he returned to England.

Before the Burts arrived there was a fresh disaster, the Bengal famine. many factors contributed to it: the Japanese occupation of Burma cut off supplies of rice from there, the military threat to eastern India meant that many thousands of troops were concentrated in the area and had to be fed, the provincial government was weak just when strength and wisdom were needed. Prices rose fantastically, village farmers were tempted by what seemed unbelievable good fortune to sell the grain reserves they would normally have stored, and then found too late that there was none to be had. Starving people poured into Calcutta to die on the streets.

The Friends' Ambulance Unit did what it could. Details are unimportant, any famine anywhere demands the same kind of action. But in the 'administrative breakdown' which afflicted Bengal, Quaker honesty and efficiency were conspicuous. the Governor, R. G. Casey, took matters into his own hands and invited Richard Symonds to join the government and coordinate relief and rehabilitation work throughout the province. By that time 1943 had given place to 1944 and Gandhi had been released. He was a sick and lonely man; his wife had died in jail, and so had his trusted secretary Mahadev Desai. But he was accessible, and Richard remembered the invitation he had given in 1942, and sought his advice about the major decision which Casey's offer entailed, taking Glan Davies with him.

Gandhi got his two visitors to sing one of his favourite hymns, *Lead Kindly Light*. He told Richard that he must follow his own conscience but that he would not find it easy to be a Government official.<sup>2</sup> In the event, Richard accepted Casey's invitation and began to tackle his gigantic job. Step by step the crisis was dealt with, and life in Bengal slowly returned to normal. The tide of war turned, and the Japanese invasion of India was halted at Kohima in Nagaland.

In 1943 some of the troubles of Bengal were repeated on a smaller scale in Madras, where the former vigorous Friends Meeting no longer existed. By 1941 not only the Danns and Dorothy Hersey, but almost all the other foreign members had left, Edward Barnes had died, and Audrey Wilson and Grace Gabb, both married to Methodist ministers, shared the life of their husbands' churches. The Indian members and attenders had no satisfactory meeting place.

Early in the year, after she had returned from Midnapur, Marjorie Sykes began living in a little three-roomed house in an area called 'Mahommedan's Gardens', within easy walking distance of the College. In former times it had been the spacious compound of a 'garden house'

on the outskirts of the city. Now it was leased in tiny plots to the many who needed a home, and had become a kind of village-in-the-city, not really a slum, but a community of low caste, low-income people. Parties of students from the College used to visit once a week for 'social service', washing some of the children and playing games with them. Marjorie's landlady, who lived in an adjacent part of the same building, was friendly with them and ready to rent her rooms. Soon one of the little rooms had become on Sundays the place for the Madras Friends Meeting. Friends sat in a circle on the floor and the little Quaker bookshelf stood in a corner.

The College National Service Committee wanted to offer the community some more constructive service. One possibility was a day nursery school for smaller children, whose parents both went out to work. The students raised the modest sum needed for a year's trial, a house nearby was rented for the school, and a trained nursery-school teacher Jayamani came to live with Marjorie in her little house.

Then in October came the Great Madras Floods. The NE monsoon came early and heavily.

After some days of it [wrote Marjorie at the time] we in the village were sodden with water, and my mud verandah twice awash. Then a good number of the water storage lakes in the district burst their banks and poured their water into our two over-full rivers. Whole areas of the city were submerged, thousands of poor people have had all their possessions swept away. It reminded me altogether too vividly of the Midnapur district after the flood last year. Our own village was fortunate, we had our feet in the water, and my courtyard was full of it, but the river did not come indoors – by about quarter of an inch! The nursery school building became an emergency refuge for a number of homeless families, and the ARP organised feeding centres. The skies cleared, and we had brilliant moonlight – greatly appreciated as there was no electric power.

In the middle of all this came our first air raid. For some nights before, people had been unable to sleep properly because of anxiety about flooding. The Japanese chose the first night on which we *could* sleep, and we did, aided by the absence of a siren. Those who did wake and hear a few explosions thought it was probably gun practice.

For the ordinary people of the city there were things of more importance than raids. Madras like Bengal had imported rice from Burma, and by 1943 there were severe shortages, but no famine, for the Madras government organised a family rationing system for essential commodities. Rice rationing worked fairly well, but rationing of firewood was done in a way that caused hardship. The poor got least, both in quantity and



quality. Its defects contributed to the next crisis in Mahommedan's Gardens, the fire of September 1944.

That weekend several travelling Friends were in Madras, Ranjit and Doris Chetsingh for an All-India Sunday School Conference, Christopher Taylor on his way to take charge at the FAU headquarters in Calcutta, Clem Alexandre beginning a well-earned holiday. Meeting on Sunday would be too big for Marjorie's little room, so she arranged for it to be held in the Quaker-built college chapel, for it was the school holiday season and both Jayamani and the students had gone away. A new companion, the schoolgirl Rani, stayed at home to cook a simple midday meal, and after Meeting Marjorie cycled back from college, leaving her four guests to follow at leisure on foot.

She had scarcely reached the house when

there came simultaneously a great shout, a smell of burning, and Rani's frightened cry, 'Fire!' The thatched roofs just outside our courtyard wall were aflame, our own house seemed in danger. We hurried our boxes into the street, while local young men rushed in, formed a bucket chain from the nearest public tap, jumped on our bathroom roof, and flung the water at the burning huts, while our succulent banana plants quenched many sparks. Fire engines arrived quickly and dealt with the rest, and in a few minutes it was all over. But in those few minutes the homes of 31 families had become a wreck of blackened slippery mud, and 110 people were left with nothing but what they stood up in. Luckily the animals were all out grazing, as it was the middle of the day. As was found later, a burst of sparks from the bad firewood had started the whole thing.

So when our guests arrived for the 'quiet meal' and the talk about Delhi Centre which we had planned, the whole area of which our house is one corner was cordoned off and soused with water, Rani was sitting on our boxes by the roadside, and I giving some primitive first aid to a man with a burnt arm. But we were soon allowed to go into the house, where Rani had finished cooking rice and greens, and covered them, before the fire began. The sauce, simmering forgotten in the kitchen, was overcooked but edible. We sat down and ate, sharing what we had with some of the hungry children whose own meal had disappeared under the ruins, and then retired to my 'sitting-room' (less full of burnt thatch than the rest of the house) to talk about the Delhi Centre, while Rani happily helped the homeless to cook meals in our vessels in our kitchen with rice and pulses from our store.

Then the Headman and I held a meeting and got list of the sufferers by families (really wonderfully accurate) so that we could calculate what was needed to give everyone one garment. By that time the day was over, and every mat, groundsheet, old sari, etc., we possessed was lent out to sleep on – luckily it was a fine night and people slept in the open field near by. But the second night about midnight came a pathetic procession, it was beginning to rain! We opened the door, and somehow our tiny house was made to hold three dozen extra people of both sexes and all ages.

For the clothing distribution we had a few saries and a little money left over from last year's flood, and many friends helped. When the distribution began there were comic moments. 'What's your name? . . . your husband's name? But an Indian woman cannot bring herself to speak of her husband by name – that would be too shameful! – so we had to guess, and the young ARP man who was helping me joined in the game with zest: 'Is it Ponnuswami . . . Munuswami? . . . Perumal? . . . Kandappan? . . .' until only the knowledge that no one would see the joke prevented me from inquiring 'Is it Rumpel-stiltskin?' It slows down the proceedings, but it puts everyone in a good humour. And how cheerful and patient they are! During the last two weeks I have sometimes been very weary but this experience alone fully justifies me in choosing to live right *among* the ordinary folk.

Every family had kept its rice ration card tucked into the thatch of the roof, out of reach of children, and the replacement of the lost cards was another tragi-comedy. The Headman got application forms, but it was a major operation to get them completed. The Rationing Officer had promised to send new cards as soon as he received the applications. He was most helpful, but when Marjorie's messenger reached the office he happened to be out. The messenger was one of the poor sufferers who (like Gandhi) was wearing a loincloth only, and the clerk who had been left in charge scornfully drove him away empty-handed.

When he came back [wrote Marjorie], patient and uncomplaining after nearly four miles walk in the scorching sun, I just blazed up. A hot telephone call from college ensued, and a promise that the missing cards should be sent by special messenger. An hour later they were in my hands, and as I waved them triumphantly at my colleagues a voice spoke within me in the words of the *Book of Jonah*: 'Doest thou well to be angry?' I answered with conviction 'YES! – being angry gets things done!' – and then began to wonder whether it was *altogether* well?



For Marjorie herself, as she had written a year earlier, was seeing more and more clearly that the real business of living was friendliness – friendliness with a heterogeneous crowd which included students, villagers, colleagues, all sorts and conditions. The external routine of ‘getting things done’ was only a necessary frame work. She was not the only one to feel the tension. As an Indian fellow-worker once asked in another context: ‘Why do all you westerners wear yourselves out trying to reform us. Sit down and *make friends*, like the Chetsinghs!’

### *Notes to Chapter XXII*

1 Richard Symonds, ‘Recollections of Horace Alexander and Gandhi’, *Indo British Review*, Madras, vol.XIX no.2, 1993, pp.10-11.

2 Ibid., p.11.

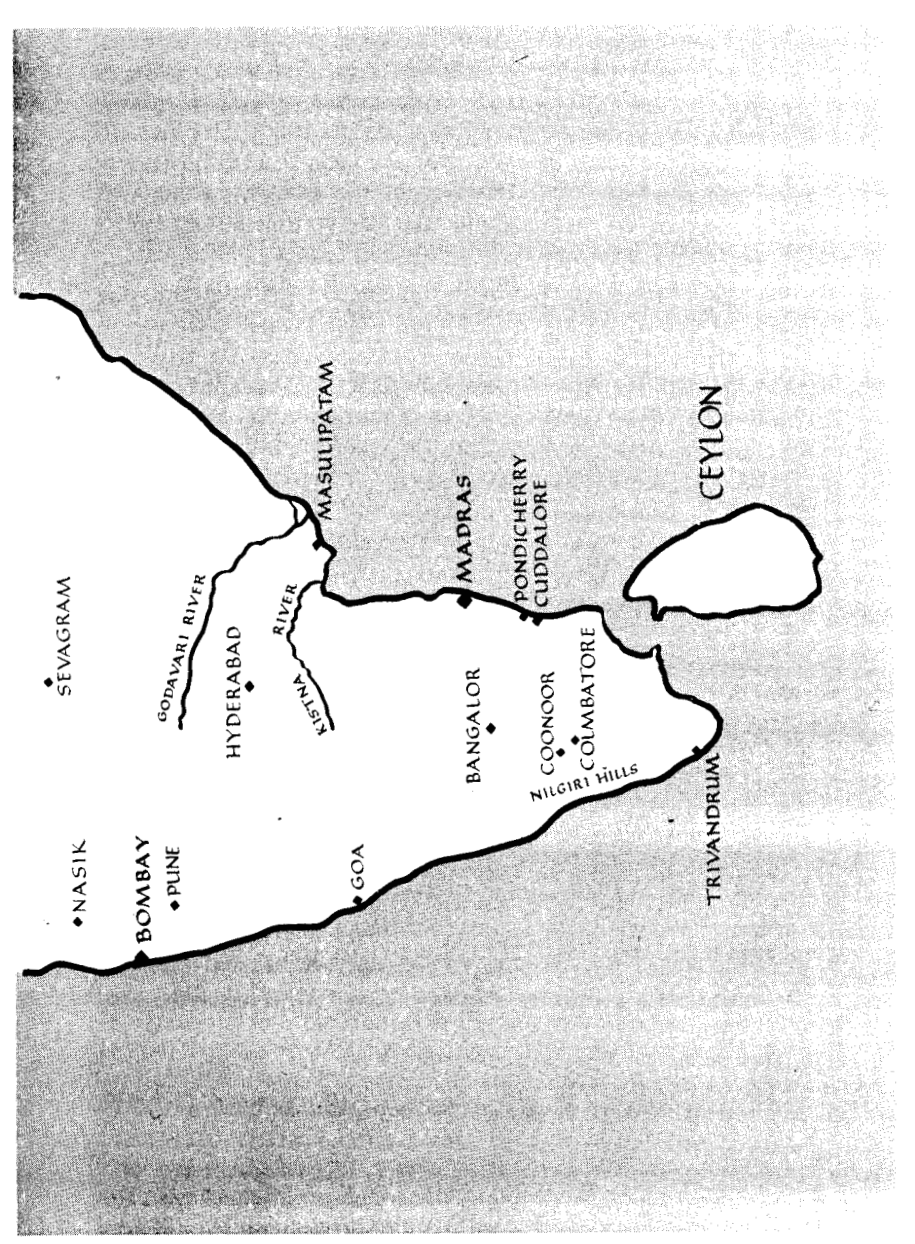
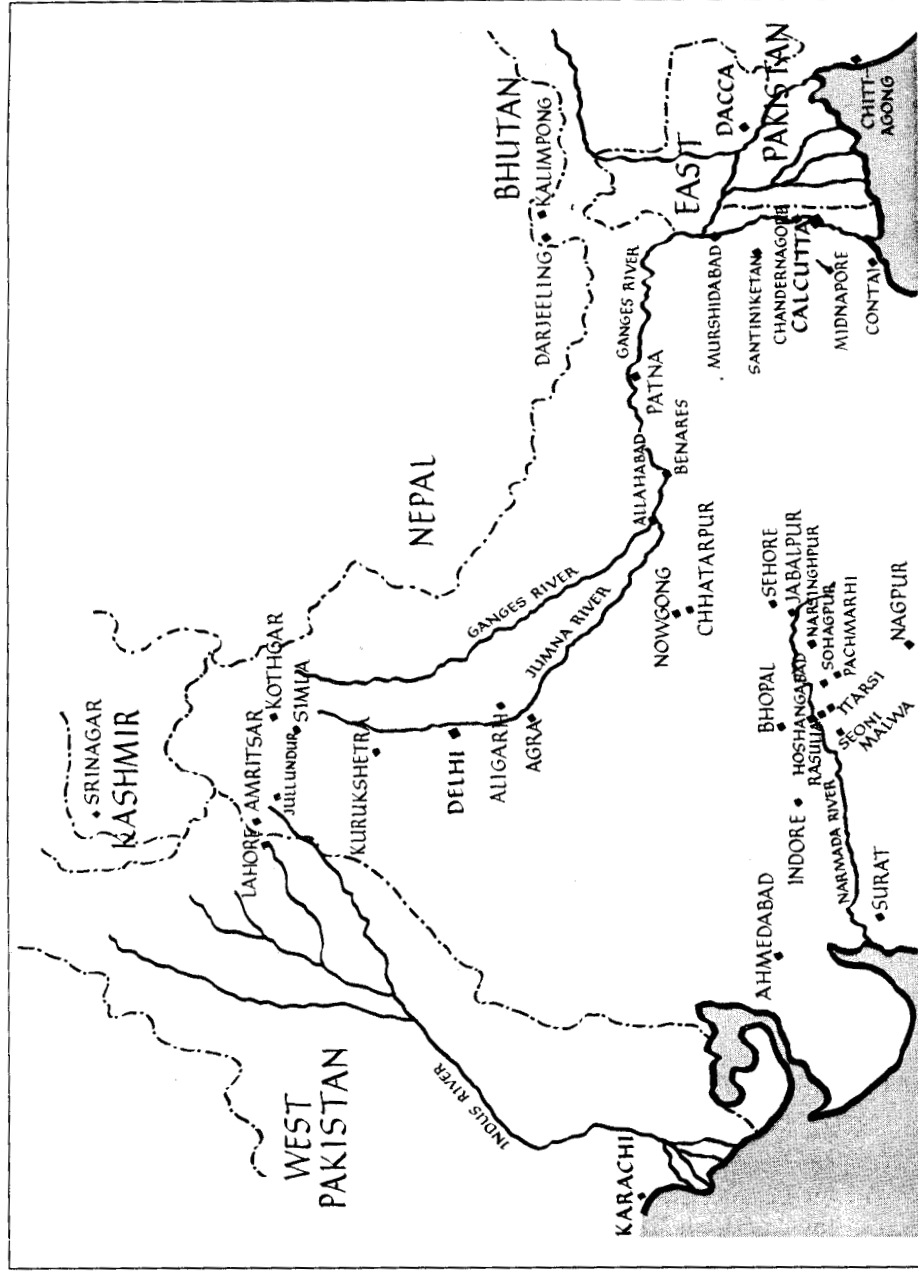
## CHAPTER XXIII

### Partition and After

by Geoffrey Carnall

‘MAKING FRIENDS’ continues to be a helpful clue in reflecting on Quaker activities in India in the later part of the war and in the period leading up to independence in 1947. The Calcutta and Delhi Centres in particular proved to be effective means of bringing together people whose established routines would have kept them firmly apart. Richard Symonds recalls that it was at dinner in 1 Upper Wood Street that the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, J. R. Blair, was first introduced to Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, and to Kiron Shankar Roy, leader of the Congress group there. This happened in the winter of 1942-3, and he had held important posts in the Government of Bengal since 1935.

Quakers were only a very small group in a vast and bewildering scene, and in trying to interpret what they actually achieved in this period, it is essential to appreciate just how bewildering the situation was. As the war was ending, the leaders of Congress were released from the detention imposed on them because of the ‘Quit India’ campaign in 1942. This meant that they were once again in a position to oppose the increasing strength of the Muslim League’s demand for Pakistan, a Muslim homeland free of Hindu domination. Congress, for its part denied that it was a Hindu party, and gave great prominence to the theme of ‘communal unity’, underlining the point by having Maulana Azad as its President, and with other Muslims occupying prominent positions in the organisation. The Muslim League was led by the austere and unbending M. A. Jinnah, who refused to recognise the political significance of any Muslims who were not members of the League. Compromise was emphatically not the prevailing mode at this time, and it is hard not to feel sympathy with the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who in the Simla Conference in 1945 and during the Cabinet Mission the



*India and Pakistan in 1947, locating some of the places mentioned by Marjorie Sykes.*

following year, obviously tried very hard to find formulae that would be acceptable to League and Congress alike. The situation was further complicated by a fairly basic mistrust among the Indians generally towards Britain, doubting even now whether she really would willingly withdraw from her imperial role. Although the newly elected Labour Government was committed to Indian independence, the machinery of British rule was still firmly in place, and who could tell what mischief that arch-antagonist of Indian aspirations, Winston Churchill, might be up to?

The atmosphere in the period between the Simla Conference and the Cabinet Mission is vividly conveyed in an unusually depressed report by Horace Alexander in *The Friend* for 1st March 1946. He had last been in India with the FAU in 1942-3, and had now returned and been there for a month. The demand for Pakistan was the result of Muslim fears, he said, and he had to concede that Congress did little to allay those fears. In the cyclone and famine disasters during the war it was possible for government and nationalists to work together. This was no longer the case:

The depths of suspicion and mistrust and defeatism are indescribable and seemingly incurable. . . . It seems as if no human wisdom, none of the actors of this last scene of the drama, is great enough to find the way to the goal which, I believe, nearly all genuinely desire. How, one asks, are we to learn the divine wisdom that can destroy fear, suspicion and arrogance? Nothing but the piercing light of truth can release Indian and Briton alike from the chains that bind them.<sup>1</sup>

This sombre mood was transient. In a stirring report Horace sent to the Friends' Service Council on the 4th March, he foresaw a continuing period of revolutionary happenings, disfigured by animosity and violence. But there was a peculiar value in having a group, even a tiny group like the Friends' Ambulance Unit, with a reputation for integrity and quiet competence,

welcoming the revolution, living so to speak right in the heart of it, and striving all the time to witness through their work and bearing to a universal spirit that may finally tire out the evil passions which every revolution brings to the surface.

There was a special point to the Unit's work in India, where social and economic crises are endemic, making those who live there for any length of time feel that nothing can be done.

I think [said Horace], it is good to have one agency that says 'No: we shall do what we can; and we shall go on doing it even if you can demonstrate to us that we are only postponing the evil day'.

The buoyant mood of the young people working with Friends at this time is vividly apparent in Hallam Tennyson's autobiography, *The Haunted Mind*. Hallam with his wife Margot started a village rehabilitation project in the Bengal countryside, some 50 miles east of Calcutta, at Pifa and Raghampur. After a rather shaky start, they soon found themselves accepted as Elder Brother and Elder Sister, objects of a 'torrent of affection'. Unusually for new arrivals, they had quickly become fluent in Bengali: after two months, Hallam claimed,

Bengali's gerunds and verbal nouns and its use of word order instead of inflection to establish meaning, came to seem more natural and expressive than most western European speech.

His fluency once almost cost him his life. During some riots in Calcutta he was in charge of an ambulance, and intervened to defend three Muslims who were being attacked by a crowd of Hindus. His eloquence in Bengali convinced them that *he* was a Muslim too, and he only escaped by throwing the ambulance's china hot-water bottle at them. They appeared to think it was a petrol bomb, and scattered: evidently a 20th-century version of the 'Quaker gunnery' mentioned in chapter III.<sup>2</sup>

But this adventure was an unimportant episode in Hallam Tennyson's narrative. The overwhelming impression he leaves is one of passionate sympathy and respect, a delight particularly in the children of the villages where he and Margot worked.

They radiated a sense of dignity and pride, they were not servile. we quickly had the sense that they belonged to an ancient and secure culture: give them a lump of clay and they sat down and moulded it into figurines which were exact replicas of those found in the ruined city of Mohenjodaro. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Reports to Quaker head offices in London and Philadelphia are inevitably more concerned with disasters than with the heartening survival of India's heritage in adverse circumstances. Adversity could certainly be relied on at this time. Thus, in July 1946 there were destructive floods on a huge scale in the eastern part of Bengal, and Unit members went off to help with inoculation against cholera and typhoid. Those remaining in Calcutta soon had to cope with a man-made tragedy engendered by the stresses and manoeuvrings inseparable from any major transfer of power. Bengal's population was about equally divided between Hindus and Muslims, but the ruling administration was in the hands of the Muslim League, with H. S. Suhrawardy as chief minister. Jinnah had declared 16th August to be a 'Direct Action' day in support of the claim to Pakistan, and the direct action in Calcutta proved to be a ferocious outbreak of killing and burning. A member of the FAU recalled that the day began as usual with the squealing sound of the first trams moving out on

to the streets, but that this was soon silenced as mobs embarked on the serious business of attacking members of the 'enemy' community.

Although there were many splendid instances of Hindus protecting their Muslim neighbours and Muslims protecting their Hindu neighbours against rioters of their own community, the only organised counter-action at first came from the Bengal Red Cross, whose staff included two British Friends, Leslie and Kathleen Cross. Their ambulances saved the lives of many victims. Horace Alexander and Mae Alexandre from the FAU toured the city in a jeep to collect families who were in danger. All kinds of people who were acquainted with the Quaker Centre came in to volunteer for ambulance work, milk distribution and other kinds of relief. They brought in food supplies, and organised rescue operations. An American Friend, Mary Rogers, who presided over the rather chaotic household at 1 Upper Wood Street, reported how one of the Hindu staff owned buffalos that were stranded in one of the city's Muslim areas. They were brought to 'our respectable street' and tethered safely to the railings.

Thus we had milk through our milkless days, our bearer's property was saved, and a barnyard atmosphere has tempered our urban existence ever since.<sup>4</sup>

After a time British troops were called out, but too late to efface the sense of devastating paralysis in high places, a nightmarish incapacity in the authorities to protect innocent people. But the soldiers proved to be useful in unexpected ways. Joan Court, a Friend working as a midwife in the Calcutta slums, did not allow the riots to interfere with her routine, and was given a lift by a truck loaded with soldiers armed with bayoneted rifles.

She pressed them into service on her arrival, and had one of the dazed Tommies holding a new-born baby in one hand as he clutched his rifle in the other.<sup>5</sup>

The Muslim League Ministry was criticised for not being sufficiently impartial between the warring communities. The Viceroy recorded complaints from his own officials about Suhrawardy's evident 'communal bias', although this does not necessarily suggest the active instigation of violence of which most Hindus suspected him.<sup>6</sup> Inevitably the troubles in Calcutta generated retaliation elsewhere: Muslims suffered in Bihar, Hindus in the Muslim-majority area of East Bengal. As time went on, though, it became possible to organise projects to rehabilitate refugees back in the villages from which they had fled. The Indian Red Cross and the Friends' Service Unit (as the FAU had now become) worked on this in the Noakhali area. Abdul Khaliq, a Muslim official of the Red Cross, was able to establish good relations with Muslim community leaders, while his Hindu colleague Niloo Das contacted Hindu families in the refugee

camps. The team was constantly approached about the supply of rations, clothing, household utensils, grants for home-building, and so on; they prompted the organisation of an intercommunal peace committee, and established a dispensary valued as much by Muslims as Hindus.

We feel [said a report sent to Friends House in London] that our strength has always been in the fact that our workers are of all communities and nationalities: Indians, British, and American, Hindus, Scheduled Caste and Muslims, all living and working together happily.<sup>7</sup>

The group had to cope with intense suspicions and some active opposition, but they were helped by the timely endorsement of Gandhi himself in the course of his famous pilgrimage to Noakhali in the winter of 1946-7.<sup>8</sup> There, for a few days, Horace Alexander joined him to support his witness, and it was on this visit that the idea of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth was conceived: of which more later.

Although H. S. Suhrawardy's role in the Calcutta killings was at best equivocal, he had shown himself to be a politician of genuine goodwill during the famine period to which Horace looked back with some nostalgia so far as Indo-British cooperation went. In a late interview, he recalled that Suhrawardy was then Minister for Civil Supplies, 'and was a great help in getting us supplies so that we could get milk for the children in the villages and this sort of thing'.<sup>9</sup> Richard Symonds recalls that he was 'a man of great imagination with whom we would sit up until all hours building castles in the air for a better, juster society in Bengal'.<sup>10</sup> He was also given to making dismissive remarks about Gandhi, saying that he was an old rogue who deceived simple-minded foreigners. Horace listened to it all, but made no attempt to argue. He was, after all, much esteemed by Suhrawardy, who said to Richard Symonds at about this time that 'no praise can be too high for that man. You have no idea how much we all admire him'.<sup>11</sup> Richard put this down to his 'gentleness, almost saintliness, which in India means infinitely more than executive ability', and was unexpected in an Englishman. Horace continued to feel goodwill towards Suhrawardy, and when Gandhi said that the Chief Minister was a bad man, Horace reminded him that like most people he was good and bad in parts. 'Like Jekyll and Hyde?' was Gandhi's response, agreeing that Stevenson's fiction had some relevance here.

Suhrawardy entreated Gandhi to stay in Calcutta at the time of the transfer of power from the British, so that he could help restrain the Hindus who were looking forward to exacting vengeance on the Muslims, held responsible for the killings of the previous August. Gandhi agreed, though he felt his duty was really with the Hindus in Noakhali. Horace himself was present at one of the most dangerous moments in this astonishing

cooperation between Mahatma and Muslim Leaguer. The three men spent the eve of independence in a deserted Muslim house in a Hindu quarter of Calcutta, where Gandhi persuaded a fiercely hostile crowd to accept Suhrawardy as someone who had turned his back on his communal past and was working to ensure that Hindus and Muslims, and the two newly independent states, could live in peace. Suhrawardy expressed shame for what had happened a year earlier, and this confession was one element in the process that enabled Calcutta to embark on its new life in an atmosphere of celebration.

It was not the only element, of course. Joan Court's trainee midwives – all Hindus – reflected the change that had taken place between 1946 and 1947. During the August 1946 killings they had all been very anti-Muslim, and Joan had had to be cautious in the expression of her views. In the summer of 1947, on the other hand, the young women took the initiative in starting a peace committee. Not that it was particularly successful: at the only meeting held, people 'spent the time shouting at each other and bringing up old grievances'. Some of the Muslims did indeed volunteer for a peace patrol, provided that an equal number of Hindus would volunteer also. There was no response, and, Joan wrote to a friend, her women were 'furiously angry'.

It was at this meeting that Sharima stopped what might have developed into an ugly situation by standing up and appealing for reason and sanity. I really felt very proud to see her do this. It was an assembly of men, with only the four girls from this [midwifery] centre to represent the women. Her little speech had the effect of temporarily calming the whole room. You, knowing how shy Sharima is normally, will appreciate her courage in speaking at all.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly the Sharimas of the city had as much to do with the happy outcome of the August troubles as Gandhi and Suhrawardy themselves. And in the surrounding countryside there was a precarious but enduring peace, which helped to sustain the enthusiastic truce in the city.

In the village rehabilitation project started by Hallam and Margot Tennyson, the 15th August was anticipated with deep anxiety, as it was not clear until 11 o'clock at night on the 14th whether the area would be awarded to India or to Pakistan. The fear was that whichever turned out to be the ruling community would try to drive out the 'minority'. An American Friend, Stuart Wright, with Jibon Banerjee and another Indian project-worker, went into the sub-divisional town of Basirhat on the eve of independence to keep in touch with community leaders, whom they had got to know well. Jibon was racked with anxiety about the safety of his wife and daughter in Dacca, which was certain to be in Pakistan, but

was reassured by the fact that in Basirhat, at least, everything proved to be peaceful and euphoric.

When the sun showed in the morning we felt that we have got new lives. We were smiling and cutting jokes with each other. On 15th morning we saw both communities were celebrating the independence day with their heart. Then we felt we should go back to Calcutta and see what is happening there. . . . The street cars and the buses were free for that day. People were riding on the top of the street cars. In all the parts of the city every body was enjoying the first Independence Day. They felt that new life and new light was coming to them. I myself also felt we really will reach to prosperity and freedom from all anxieties. Our people will get two square meals a day. Children will get education. The hospitals will be open for all.<sup>13</sup>

The euphoria passed, of course, and the underlying tensions remained. In Calcutta itself there was a large-scale recurrence of rioting at the end of August, but Gandhi embarked on an unlimited fast, which served to concentrate minds wonderfully. No one could bear the thought of being the occasion of the Mahatma's death. Within a few days community leaders were able to assure him that peace was again restored, and that they would never again allow communal strife to recur in the city.<sup>14</sup> Gandhi now felt free to travel to Delhi and the Punjab, where communal violence on a scale vaster than anyone could have previously imagined was engulfing the newly-partitioned province.

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The bloody upheavals that accompanied the achievement of independence were a harrowing disappointment to people like Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison who had been intimately associated for many years with efforts to keep the British Government in touch with Indian aspirations, and had done so much to keep lines of communication open. In spite of the anguish, though, there must have been an enduring satisfaction in the part played by the India Conciliation Group, not least in its final burst of activity in the background of the Cabinet Mission to India in the early summer of 1946. Agatha and Horace knew two members of the Mission very well – Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Pethick-Lawrence – and were able to encourage trust in a distinctly untrusting atmosphere. They knew that Jinnah's agreement to a loose union of provinces was perceived by Congress as 'worse than Pakistan';



*Preparing for the Cabinet Mission, 1946. From left to right: Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Horace Alexander, Mahatma Gandhi, Agatha Harrison, Pyarelal Nayyar.*

they also knew that the Mission felt that from the League's point of view, Jinnah had made a very big concession. The Congress belief that the Ministers spent their whole time making concessions to the League was, Horace thought, 'a thoroughly jaundiced view of the proceedings', and he evidently said so to Gandhi and his colleagues.<sup>15</sup> The two British Friends worked closely with Sudhir Ghosh, whose bridge-building efforts in Calcutta have been noted in the previous chapter. He was particularly trusted by Gandhi as an emissary in the Cabinet Mission negotiations, where some progress was indeed made.<sup>16</sup> But the two parties remained dauntingly far apart. On the crucial issue of the League's difficult insistence on parity with Congress in the proposed Interim Government, Horace and Agatha's instincts would clearly have warmed to the Viceroy's argument that 'if both parties were determined to work together for the good of India in the interim period, parity had no real meaning'. But that was emphatically not how Congress saw it.

The most public intervention by Friends in the Cabinet Mission's proceedings were the meetings for worship in the New Delhi YWCA arranged by Agatha Harrison to support the Mission's work. Gandhi attended along with the three British Ministers, although the third member of the mission, A. V. Alexander, felt that 'that sort of thing did not suit him. He wanted a hymn or something to liven things up'.<sup>17</sup>

The Cabinet Mission failed in its task of breaking the deadlock between Congress and League. Jawaharlal Nehru made an indiscreet speech which seemed to withdraw the terms on which the League had reluctantly agreed to cooperate with the Cabinet Mission. The Viceroy felt that Horace and Agatha themselves were not altogether helpful in their privileged access both to Gandhi and the Cabinet Mission: it was natural for Jinnah to be suspicious of these unofficial contacts. 'I wonder whether I should have been more vigorous about it.'<sup>18</sup>

Neither Jinnah nor the Viceroy perhaps appreciated how diligently these two weighty Friends had worked to further an understanding between the parties, but the sad fact remains that mistrust had become so intense that it was probably beyond anyone's power to overcome it. Wavell's successor as Viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, accepted that the partition of the subcontinent was now inevitable, and the few months in which he held the office were spent in hastening the reorganisation of government into a new India and Pakistan.

Independence and partition duly came on 15th August 1947. While Gandhi, Suhrawardy and some courageous citizens had managed to keep the peace in Bengal, in the Punjab there was a peculiarly ferocious civil war, with the slaughter of people belonging to whatever happened to be the minority community on each side of the new frontier. Huge numbers of refugees trekked to relative safety on the other side.

In this appalling situation, Friends were among those who converged on Delhi and the Punjab to try to bring some help to the victims. In Delhi itself, the city's Muslims took refuge in a massive relic of the Moghul emperors, the old fort, Purana Qila. Writing to Ranjit Chetsingh on 19th September, Horace Alexander described how refugees kept pouring into the 'camp', 'a hideous congestion of suffering humanity today, horribly filthy'. The two or three Quaker workers available set up a 'welfare tent', together with other volunteers who included Arthur Moore, former Editor of *The Statesman* newspaper. Although they performed a variety of 'small disorganised errands or favours',<sup>19</sup> their most useful service proved to be the running of an unofficial post office and communications centre, getting such letters as came through delivered, putting separate members of families in touch with each other, and helping people to collect salaries due to them.

By the end of October 1947 most refugees in Purana Qila had been evacuated to Pakistan, but tackling the enormous problems generated by the millions of uprooted people had hardly begun. There were still huge numbers of refugees living in makeshift camps in their new homelands, without work and with little hope for the future. While the governments



were gradually getting the situation in hand with work centres and rehabilitation loans,<sup>20</sup> many individuals were carrying forward small-scale projects which, taken together, had an encouraging effect. A British Friend, Gladys Owen, organised knitting in the enormous camp at Kurukshetra, 100 miles north of Delhi. She took a large bale of wool with her, but there were few knitting needles. Someone in the camp solved this problem by a visit to Simla, where knitting needles abounded. But then they ran out of wool. More negotiations, more journeyings: eventually the Government sent 28 bales, and, since over 11,000 women were now knitting away, Kurukshetra was sufficiently provided with warm pullovers before the winter came.

Someone observing Gladys and her enthusiastic team of women helpers remarked that he hoped he would not be misunderstood if he said that she seemed to be 'absolutely in her element', being 'one of those people who seem to enjoy misery and discomfort as long as they are doing something for others'.<sup>21</sup> Her own reports, certainly, are remarkably buoyant and hopeful.

Daunting though the situation remained, one immense disaster at least was averted. In the aftermath of partition there had been some talk of war between India and Pakistan: even Gandhi seemed to endorse the idea for a time. Towards the end of September Horace Alexander saw Gandhi almost daily, and on one occasion 'pleaded and argued with him to be less "belligerent", for nearly 20 minutes'.<sup>22</sup> The crisis passed, and Horace Alexander and Richard Symonds helped to keep the peace by serving as liaison officers for the East and West Punjab Governments on both sides of the frontier to provide authentic information and to counter contentious stories.

Not that it was necessarily easy for anyone perceived as an outsider to be helpful. A young American doctor working with the FSU, Bob Pittenger, sent in confidential reports to the American Friends' Service Committee which give a particularly vivid picture of the difficulties in relief work. He had been sent to one of the outlying refugee camps near Amritsar with the blessing of the new East Punjab Government, but was deeply frustrated by what he saw as the inadequacy of organisation by the medical staff on the spot. It was not for him to take charge, but he felt compelled, as he put it, to 'protrude himself'. They needed a bigger team to do inoculations, but suggestions were not forthcoming about where to get them. 'So I pop out with a few ideas. How about the medical students of their local medical school?' - No, not likely. Then -

This morning, they have the expectancy of five med students who will help with inoculations.

Score one for the home team! but it is a very disagreeable position to have to organise by being the gad-fly in people's ointment. . . . I have tried to be tactful and was very pleased when one of the ideas we had discussed yesterday came out as a development of his own thinking.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps Bob's tact was not always quite tactful enough, but he was working under enormous stress, and his reports on the whole show someone desperately trying to make sense of a chaotic situation, parallel, he believed, to that in the war-ravaged countries of Europe. He learnt much from the many friends of the FSU's Punjabi worker, Swarn Sarin, a Hindu from Lahore - invaluable contacts for relief work, and representative in their feelings and attitudes:

Young people who were eager for the independence and many interested in the greater development of India (and Pakistan), men who were strongly socialistic and progressive in their thinking, most of them with high hopes for this new period - all of them are very depressed by the occurrences of these past few weeks. . . . They have lost friends and find themselves in abnormal atmosphere which is all one religious group without a chance for the free exchange of ideas. Minds are so prejudiced now that a man can scarcely defend what he feels or knows to be true if it is antagonistic to the prevailing prejudice.

'This', he concluded, 'is a real opportunity for the Friendly spirit.'<sup>24</sup>



Jibon Banerjee (second from left) and Swarn Sarin (right) with unidentified official near Port Canning, 1946.

Swarn Sarin herself was a remarkable example of those who found working with Quakers congenial and productive. She came from the same background as Jawaharlal Nehru – her father knew his father – and she had the knack of coping with the most stressful situations with a supreme self-assurance: emphatically a woman in the tradition of Queen Ahalyabai (see Chapter III). Hallam Tennyson, who was particularly struck by her ability to ‘masticate a large red chilli while continuing to talk about the problems of the jute industry’, describes her outstanding rehabilitation work (in 1946) in the flooded area between Port Canning and Diamond Harbour, south of Calcutta.

It was she who had surveyed the area, bullied the Government into providing rice and rehabilitation, and persuaded the appropriate Ministry that it should take the repair of the embankment out of the incompetent and uncaring hands of private enterprise.<sup>25</sup>

The then Government wanted to award him a Star of India (Second Class) for what was actually Swarn’s work. He very properly declined: apart from anything else, there was nothing second-class about Swarn.

This spiritual descendant of Queen Ahalyabai brought all her powers to bear on the crisis in the Punjab. Always beautifully dressed, she was tireless in her efforts to do what could be done, getting permission for army barracks to be used as refugee camps, distributing inadequate supplies of milk to expectant mothers and young children, and eventually organising training centres for destitute women and women who had been ‘abducted’ from their families. In order to develop this last enterprise, it was important for her to go to Delhi to consult the Government’s Rehabilitation Department and to see working training centres and industrial schools. But she was held up in Amritsar: no aircraft, trains or other transport were available to take her to the capital. Frustrated in this, she spent her time helping one of her old friends, the overworked Pakistani liaison officer in a local Muslim refugee camp. Then Lady Mountbatten paid a visit to Amritsar: ‘I was fortunate enough’, Swarn reported smoothly, ‘to get a seat in their plane.’ No one who knew Swarn will be particularly surprised.<sup>26</sup>

Swarn Sarin was decidedly and proudly a Hindu of good family, and had little patience with the idea of a Christian mission. She was happy to work with Friends because they valued her as she was, and because she and they had shared the searing experience of maintaining a competent witness of humaneness in the midst of horrifying communal upheavals. It was of course Gandhi himself who was the outstanding witness in this trial, and paradoxically his assassination by a fellow-Hindu on the 30th January 1948 marked the beginning of a more hopeful period of recovery

from the communal fever. It was then that Horace Alexander took forward two projects in which Gandhi had been interested, a meeting in India of pacifists from all over the world, and the establishment of what came to be known as a Fellowship of Friends of Truth.

The World Pacifist Meeting, held in the winter of 1949-1950, was of some symbolic importance. It was held in two sessions, one at Tagore’s ashram at Santiniketan in Bengal, the other at Gandhi’s ashram at Sevagram in central India, thus emphasising India’s position as home to men identified with the transcendence of ‘narrow domestic walls’ and of violence. It was a rallying point for the rather dispirited pacifist movement that had survived the Second World War. The German novelist Thomas Mann, in a message to those taking part, saw the occasion as one that marked a ‘historical moment’ when the utopian suddenly became a practical necessity; ‘peace has become the supreme commandment.’ He hoped and believed that

the message which will reach us from the primeval home of human wisdom will make a deep and beneficial impression upon all the rest of the world.<sup>27</sup>

The Meeting can hardly be said to have achieved anything like this, but it certainly pointed the way to India’s foreign policy of non-alignment that played such a significant and constructive role in the most dangerous years of the Cold War between the USA and the USSR.

In Horace Alexander’s correspondence, preparations for the World Pacifist Meeting figure alongside a much more modest concern, the fostering of a fellowship that carried forward the heart-unity achieved during the struggle for independence and peace in the sub-continent. The idea had been first mooted when Horace Alexander visited Gandhi during his Noakhali mission, and suggested that perhaps the Society of Friends might be the means of bringing together people of different faiths in a way that would strengthen their commitment to service of God and humanity. Gandhi was receptive to the idea, provided it could be accepted that it was as natural for a Hindu or a Muslim to grow into a Friend as it was for a Christian.<sup>28</sup>

This was fine so far as Horace was concerned, and with those, like Donald Groom, who shared his outlook. They felt able to accept that silent waiting on God, gathering in humble expectation to find unity and strength, might lead them into unknown territory, way beyond anything that was recognisably Quaker. ‘It must be free to grow in the Spirit.’ Such speculations were not acceptable to most Friends in Mid-India Yearly Meeting, and even as ecumenically-minded a Friend as Ranjit Chetsingh regarded the enterprise with some suspicion as vague and ‘theosophical’. Correspondence with weighty British Friends showed considerable

anxiety about the matter. In August 1949, a Woodbrooke-based group – Robert Davis, Hugh Doncaster, Margaret Hobling and J. Philip Wragge – felt constrained to point out that ‘a fully Quaker fellowship’ could not be established except on the basis of acknowledging ‘the unique place of Jesus Christ in the spiritual and religious life of mankind’. Horace was annoyed by this letter, feeling that it was erecting a credal barrier. He couldn’t imagine anyone entering the Fellowship who had not had the experience *we* would describe as Christian, ‘but it does not in the least follow that they will all call it that’. He was baffled by the suggestion that ‘this venture somehow hampers us from expressing our full religious convictions. It does not do so in the least’.<sup>29</sup>

Horace was the more insistent on the importance of the Fellowship because of what he perceived as fresh life in the groups in India that had drawn inspiration from Gandhi, people determined to work for peace among the religious communities and social classes and for the uplift of the poverty-stricken millions. It was, he felt, ‘a wonderful time to be alive in India’.<sup>30</sup>

The Fellowship had its first general meeting in Hyderabad in December 1950, and continued to provide helpful networks for people like the saintly Hindu Quaker Gurdial Mallik, or Donald Groom in his later association with Vinoba Bhave and his land-gift mission. But it is fair to say that the role glimpsed by a hopeful Horace Alexander in the summer of 1949 was not achieved. The letters of such Quaker missionaries as Geoffrey Maw in mid-India suggest a more intimate connection with the life of the country than ever quite emerges from the files of the Fellowship. How splendidly part of the community he seems when describing the doings of the Girls’ Boarding School in Sohagpur! The school gave an entertainment as part of the town’s celebrations of Gandhi’s birthday, 2nd October 1947.

All the elite of Sohagpur were invited, and all the un-elite gate-crashed in the most embarrassing manner, but the whole thing was reckoned a great success.<sup>31</sup>

Geoffrey Maw’s interest in Hindu spirituality, which led him on his pilgrimages, co-existed comfortably with his Christian commitment. He was **an uninhibited explorer of the spiritual world. One story will sufficiently** illustrate his temperament. He once saw at a religious festival a huge image of a boar representing the boar incarnation of Vishnu. Those who could crawl under it successfully would know that their sins had been forgiven. Geoffrey was interested, ‘having met the same teaching in connection with other kinds of squeezes’. He had a shot himself, mainly for the sake of a photograph, but got stuck, much to the amusement of the onlookers, who assured him that his sins were evidently *not* forgiven.<sup>32</sup>

Geoffrey Maw’s cheerful witness was made in conditions that must often have seemed vexatious and discouraging. This history has sufficiently illustrated the many disturbing conflicts and stresses of Friends’ work in mid-India. It seems right, none the less, in bringing the story to a close on the threshold of India’s independence, to do so in Rasulia. In the spring of 1950, Donald Groom had been in Bengal, where there had been a disturbing renewal of communal violence which had brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. He returned to find that Dr B. V. Keskar, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, had been invited to address the local Sarvodaya group in Rasulia. The minister was emphatic that war with Pakistan was out of the question, and that India’s task was to ensure peace between the communities and the removal of caste barriers. Thus, within the space of a few weeks, Donald had experienced both the depressing recrudescence of the destructive spirit that had raged in the Punjab less than three years before, and on the other hand, evidence in the Government of a firm and confident commitment to peace. He reflected that Dr Keskar had come to Rasulia partly because he had been sheltered there when he was on the run from the police after the arrests of Congress leaders in the ‘Quit India’ crisis of 1942. Donald recalled how in Paris in 1939 he had learnt from him about Gandhi’s campaigning, ‘not through hatred and bloodshed but through raising up and strengthening the good in man’.<sup>33</sup> He was greatly moved by Dr Keskar’s reaffirmation of this commitment at a meeting that took place ‘largely because of friendships I made nine or ten years ago’. He added: ‘One never knows the full significance of what is happening at any moment.’<sup>34</sup>

Many Quakers in India since the 17th century could have said ‘Amen’ to that.

### *Notes to Chapter XXIII*

I am much indebted to the AFSC archivist, Jack Sutters, for his help and advice in finding material for this chapter.

- 1 Pp. 165-6.
- 2 Hallam Tennyson, *The Haunted Mind*, 1984, p.102.
- 3 Ibid., p.101.
- 4 Report on 1 Upper Wood Street Activities, August/December 1964 (London 4613/12).
- 5 Julia Abrahamson, report to AFSC, 21st August 1946.

- 6 Wavell: *The Viceroy's Journal*, ed. Penderel Moon, 1973, p.339.
- 7 North Hamchadi Project, November/December 1946 (London 4612/16).
- 8 Mae Alexandre and Niloo Das reported to Gandhi in Srirampur on 19th December 1946. See Mae's report to the AFSC dated 20th December.
- 9 Interview with Raj Kothari, c.1984.
- 10 Richard Symonds, *Recollections of Horace Alexander and Gandhi*.
- 11 Letter to Brandon Cadbury, 18th January 1943.
- 12 AFSC Program in India, Color and Background Material No.10, July 1947.
- 13 Jibon Banerjee, letter to Geoffrey Carnall, 17th August 1958.
- 14 Manubehn Gandhi, *The Miracle of Calcutta*, Ahmedabad 1959, pp.94-95. Cp. M. K. Gandhi, *Communal Unity*, Ahmedabad 1949, pp.742-750, reprinting material from *Harijan*, 14th September 1947.
- 15 MS paper by Horace Alexander, 16th-18th May 1946.
- 16 See Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emissary*, 1967.
- 17 Horace Alexander, as above.
- 18 Wavell. *the Viceroy's Journal*, ed. P. Moon, 1973, p.311.
- 19 Report to AFSC by Russ Curtis, 7th September-18th October 1947, received Philadelphia 13th November.
- 20 See Horace Alexander, *New Citizens of India*, Bombay, 1951.
- 21 FSU report, 13th December 1947.
- 22 Letter to Paul Sturge, 26th September 1947.
- 23 Report to AFSC by Bob Pittenger, 21st September 1947.
- 24 Ibid., 18th September 1947.
- 25 Hallam Tennyson, *The Haunted Mind*, 1984, p.99.
- 26 Report on conditions in Amritsar by Swarn Sarin, September-October 1947, received AFSC 13th November 1947.
- 27 *The Task of Peace-Making. Reports of the World Pacifist Meeting, Santiniketan and Sevagram*, Calcutta, 1951, p.3.
- 28 Horace Alexander's first glimpse of the idea is perhaps expressed in Chapter 12 of *The Indian Ferment* (1929), where he rejects the assumption that 'the true disciple of Christ in the East today ought to be seeking for "converts"'. It is 'Christ-like lives' that are 'the only force that can save the world' (p.236). See Chapter xix, above.
- 29 Friends House Temp. MSS.577/26, 1st August 1949, 10th August 1949.
- 30 Ibid., 577/27, 11th May 1949.
- 31 Friends Service Council, IN 10, letter to Roderick Ede, 7th October 1947.
- 32 Ibid., 20th January 1948.
- 33 *The Friend*, 18th August 1972.
- 34 *The Friendly Way* 6, July 1950.

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## Marjorie Sykes

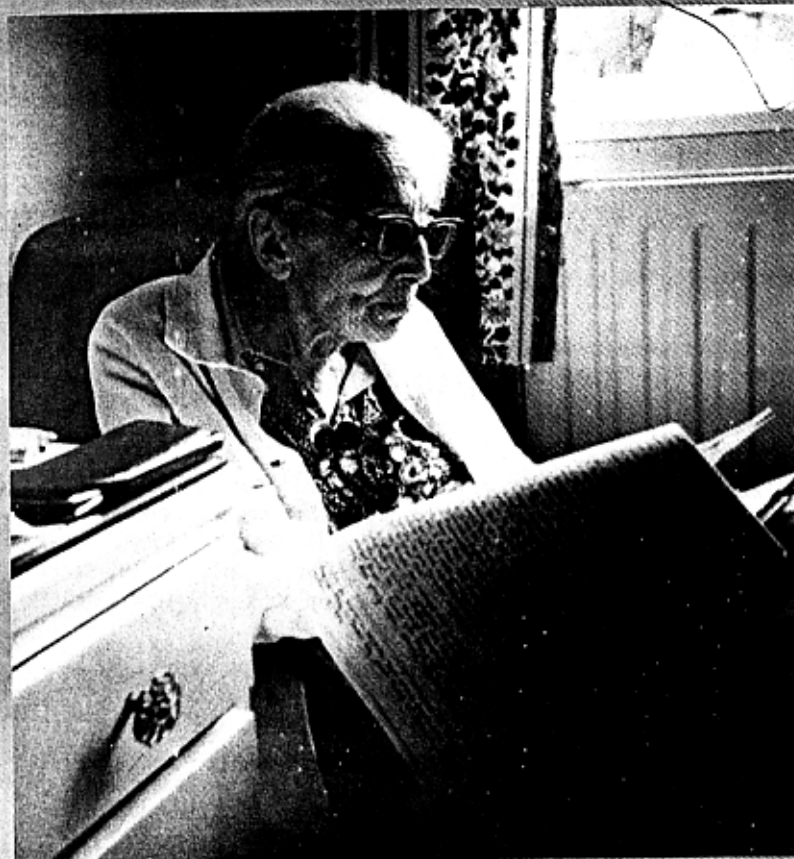
MARJORIE SYKES was born in 1905 in England and grew up in a coal-mining area in South Yorkshire where her father was headmaster of the local school. She graduated with first class Honours in English from Cambridge University and in 1928 went to India to teach at the Bentinck School for girls in Madras and very soon became Principal. It was during those years that she became a Quaker.

In 1939, she was invited by Rabindranath Tagore to be Representative of English Culture in his innovative university at Santiniketan in Bengal and worked closely with him during the last years of his life. She became fluent in Bengali and translated many of his works into English. It was then that she came to know Charles Freer Andrews well and after his death she held the C. F. Andrews Memorial Chair while she worked on his biography.

Marjorie knew Gandhi very well and was active in his non-violent movement for Indian independence. After independence was achieved, she was Principal of his Basic Education programme at Sevagram, training teachers in Gandhi's social reforms. She later extended this programme to her own home in the Nilgiri Hills of South India. She was invited to come to the United States and Canada as a consultant to the non-violent Civil Rights Movement in 1964 and on her return to India, was a member of the Peacekeeping Team monitoring the ceasefire between the Indian Government and the Nagaland Independence fighters.

Marjorie became increasingly active among Quakers in India and elsewhere – often at Rasulia, the Friends Centre in mid-India. She travelled around the Pacific Rim at the invitation of Pacific and North Pacific Yearly Meetings in the United States as their Friend-from-the Orient. There followed periods as Friend-in-Residence at Quaker Study Centres – Pendle Hill in the United States and Woodbrooke in England.

Throughout her life, Marjorie found time to write books, articles and letters and to give talks to large audiences and small groups in many countries, thus being a bridge between people within and without India. Although Marjorie died on 17th August 1995, her life will continue to be an inspiration for years to come.



(Photo: Chris Lanyon)

**M**ARJORIE SYKES in her retirement at Swarthmore, Buckinghamshire, working on the beautiful manuscript of this book in 1994, at age 89: see p.327.

**G**EOFFREY CARNALL first met Marjorie Sykes when he was in the Friends' Service Unit in India in 1948-50. He is one of the many people who helped her in her research, and on her death gladly agreed to edit her manuscript for publication, and write a final chapter which brings the narrative up to Indian Independence in 1947. Geoffrey was for many years Reader in English Literature at Edinburgh University, and undertook this task while Clerk of Quaker Home Service Literature Committee. He is writing a biography of Horace Alexander.



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